A
Redtail's Dream

*

To my Parents

•

Because they have always
been there for me.

© Minna Sundberg

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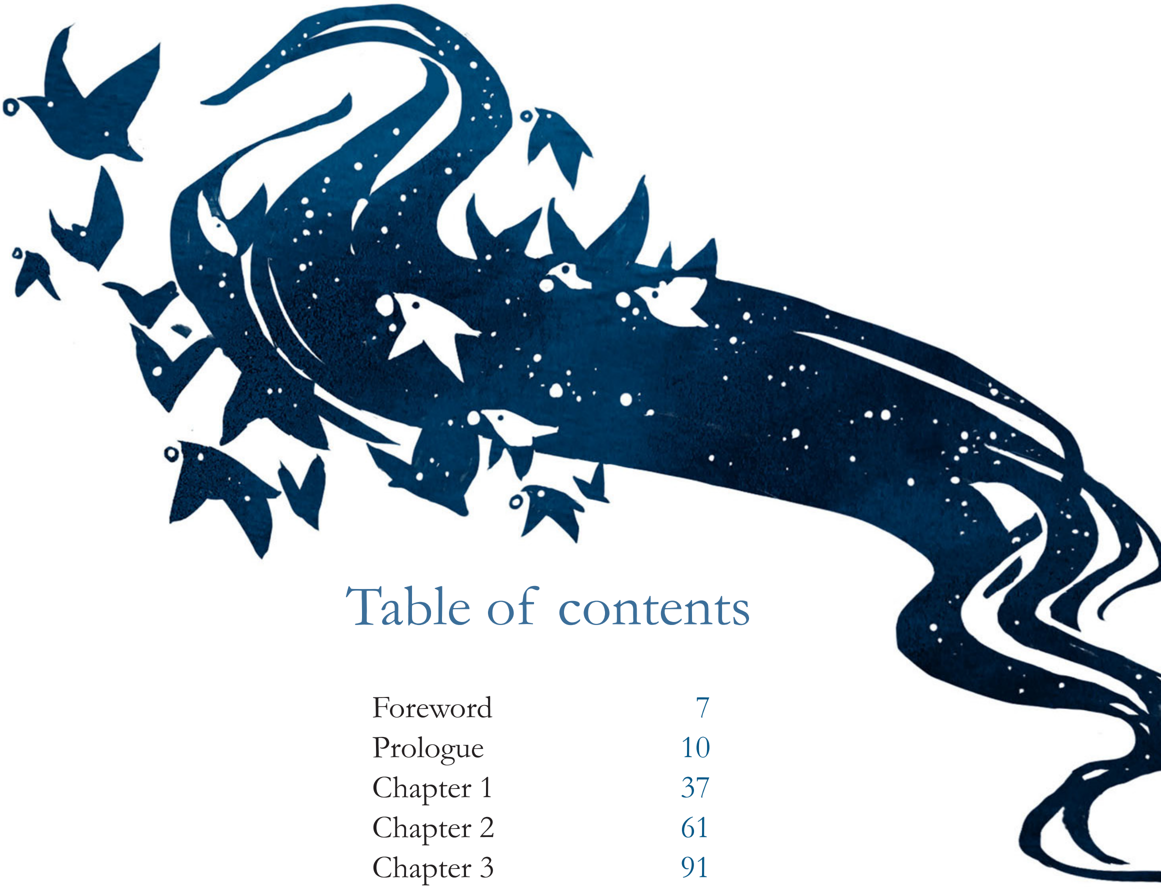
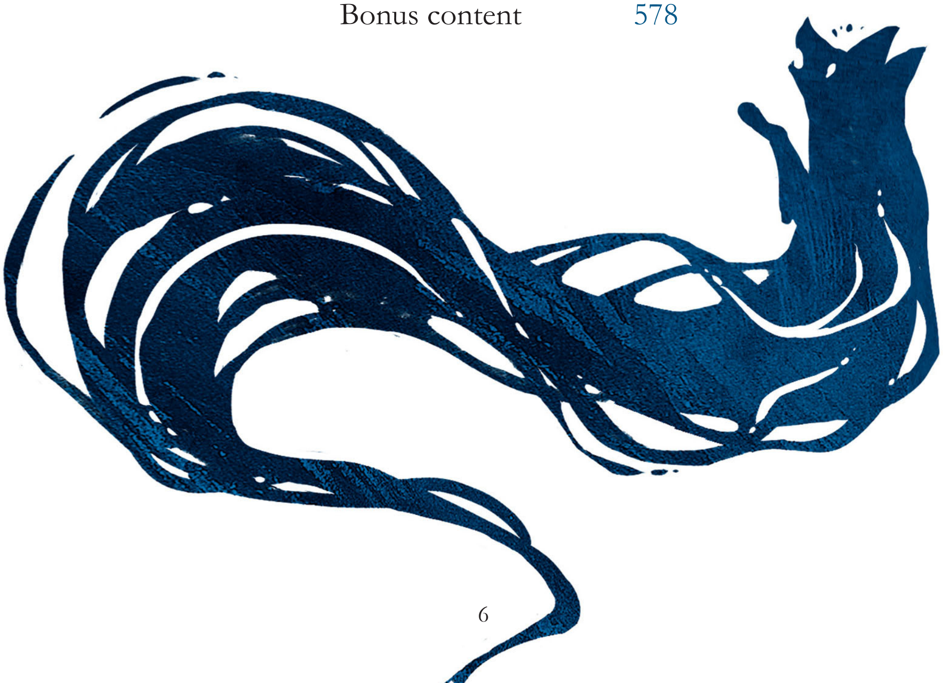


Table of contents

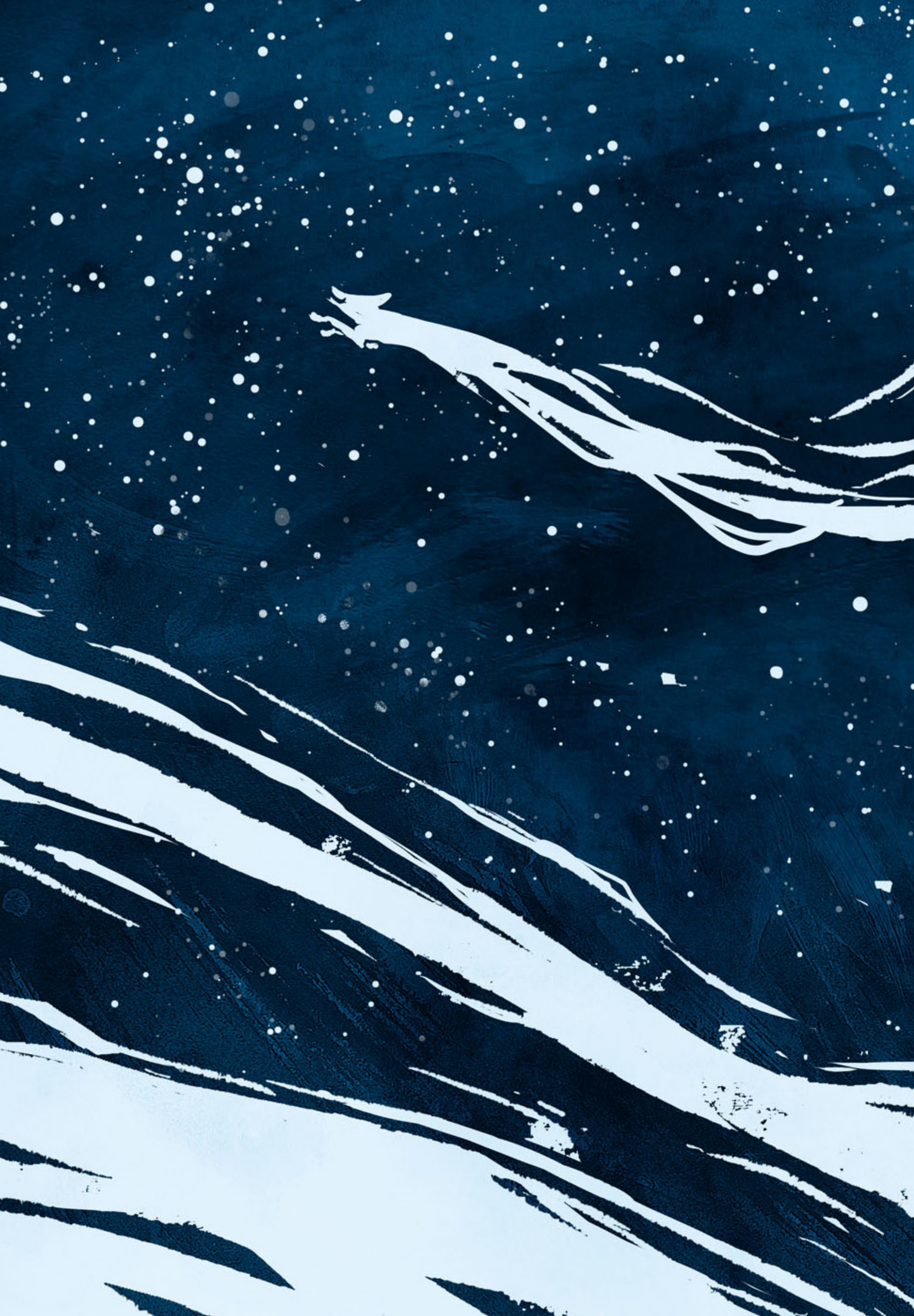
Foreword	7
Prologue	10
Chapter 1	37
Chapter 2	61
Chapter 3	91
Chapter 4	155
Chapter 5	289
Chapter 6	409
Chapter 7	459
Chapter 8	533
Afterword	576
Bonus content	578

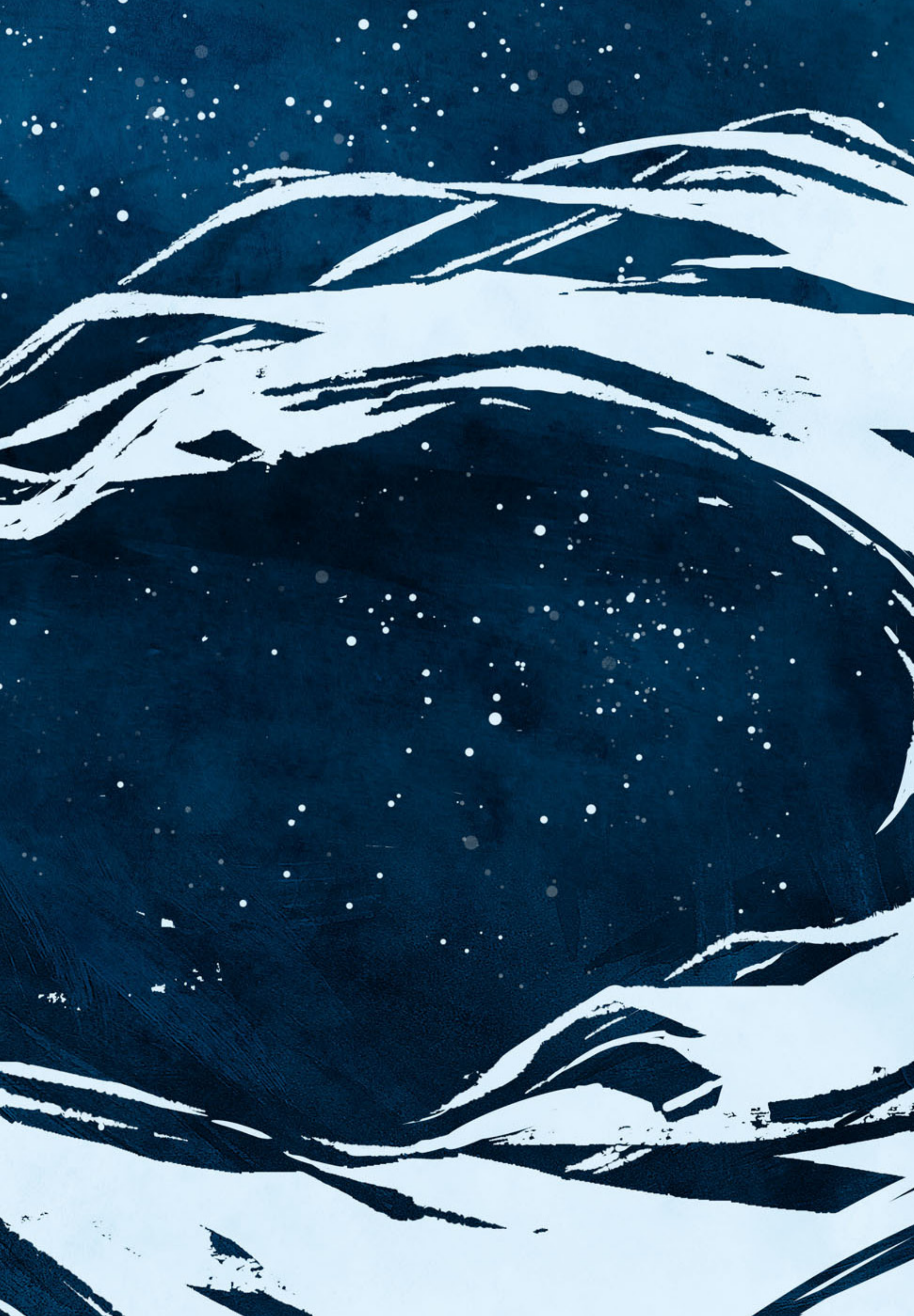


Foreword

I did honestly not expect to ever be in a position where I would need to write a foreword for this comic of mine. I didn't plan to make a book out of it. Frankly, I considered to never even show it to other people when I started drawing. I simply wanted to practice drawing comics all on my own, and not reveal my first attempt at a major project to anyone. Because what if the outcome was something embarrassingly bad, or, even worse, if I gave up halfway through? Failure wouldn't be as bad if no one but myself even knew that I had tried, right?

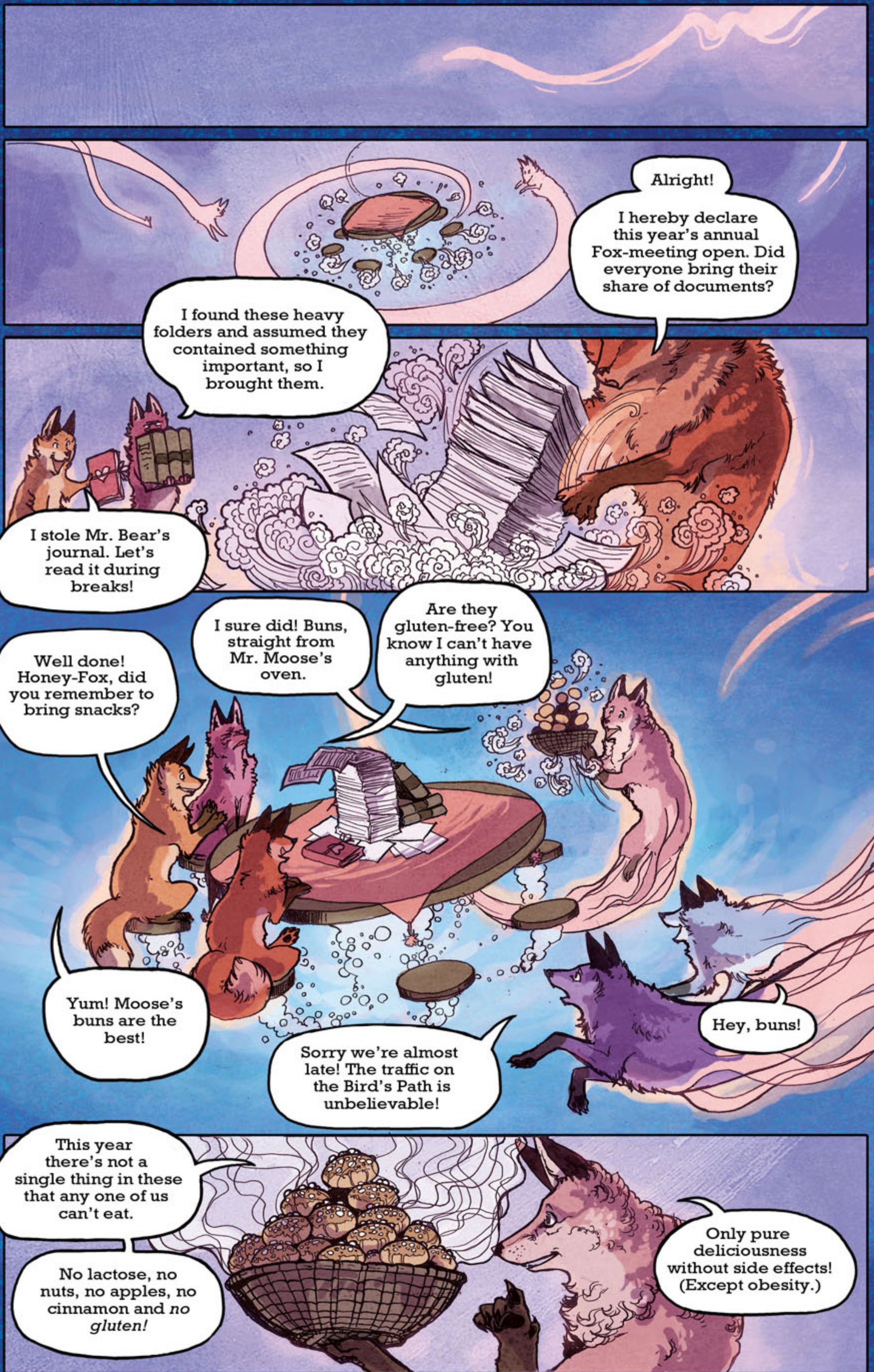
But after drawing the first chapter I decided to toss this comic out into the world wide web for complete complete strangers to gawk at. And to my great surprise people liked what I had made! The kind words fueled me to finish this whole comic in just over two years, and the wonderful support of my online readers is also what finally made me agree to make this book. I hope you'll enjoy the following story: the journey of a young man and his dog through a world built upon Finnish mythology.

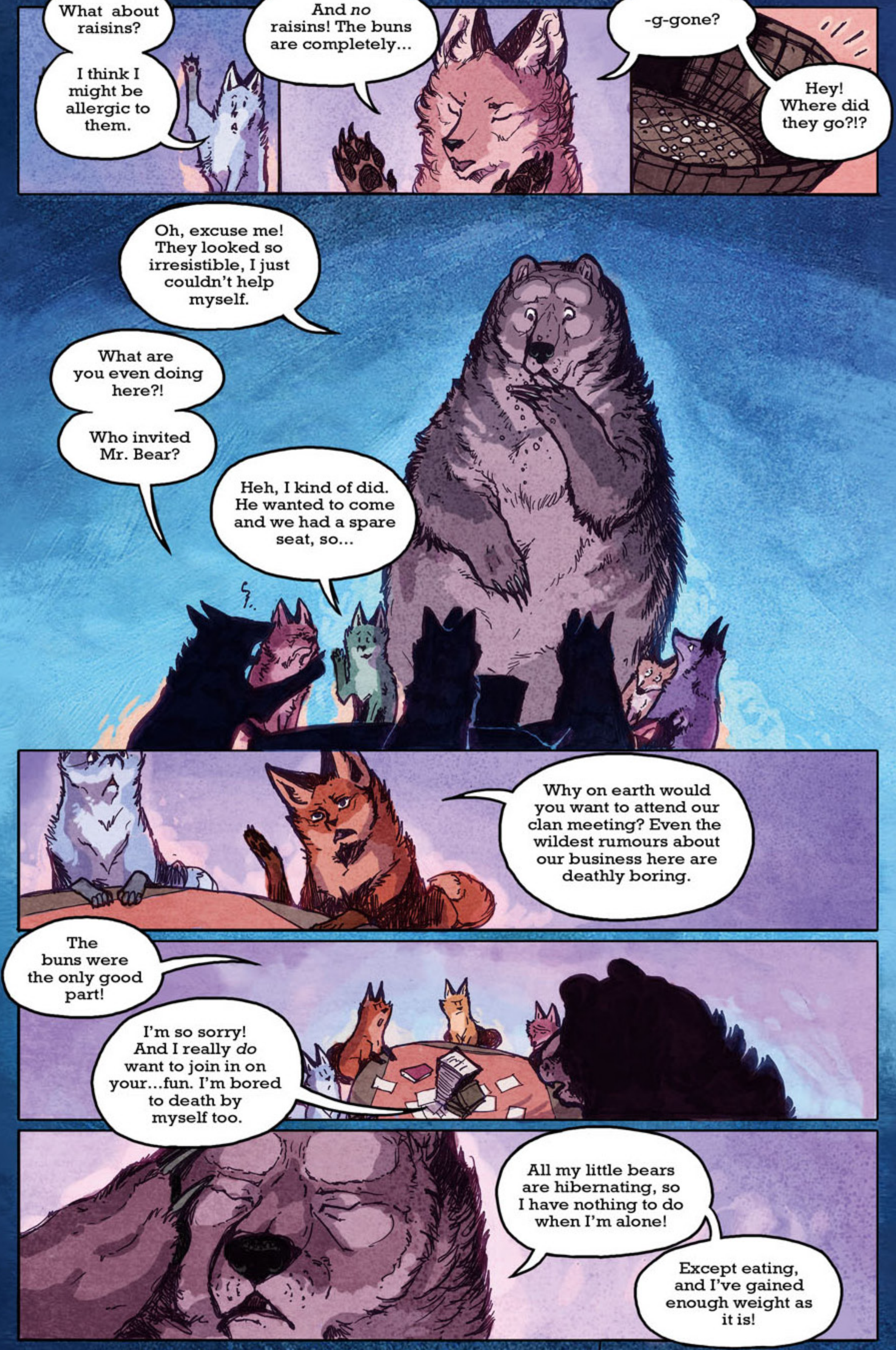


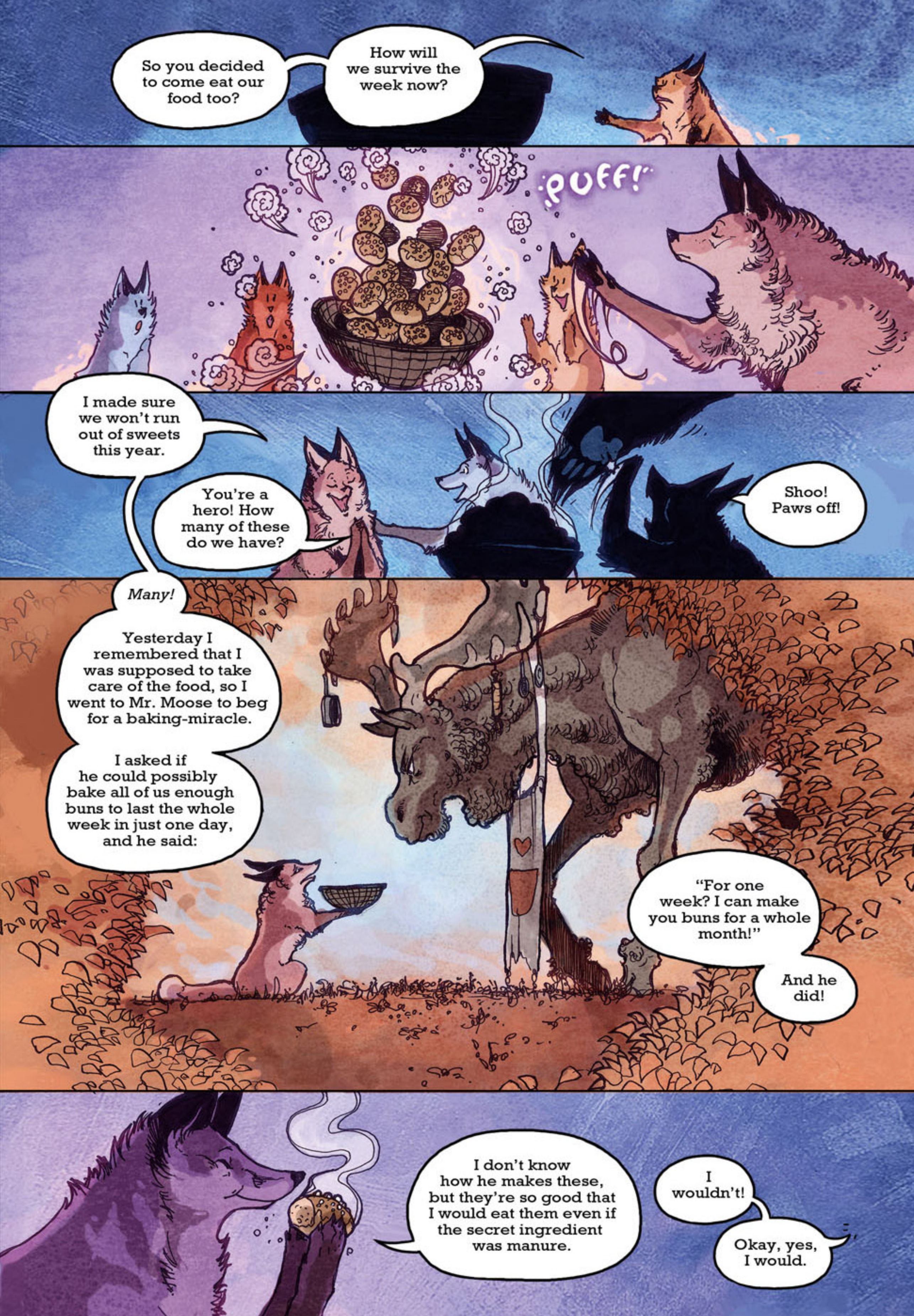


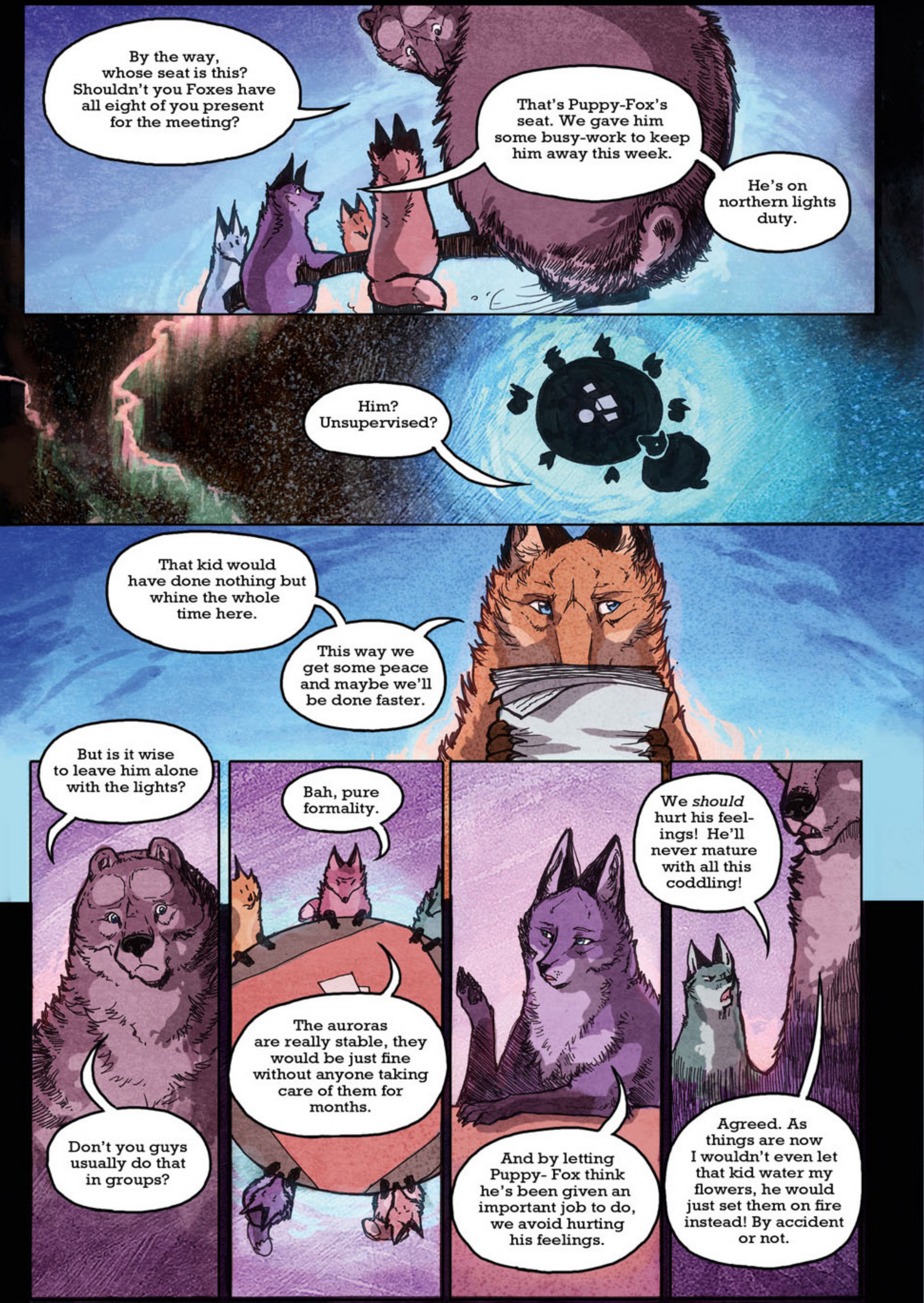
A Redtail's Dream

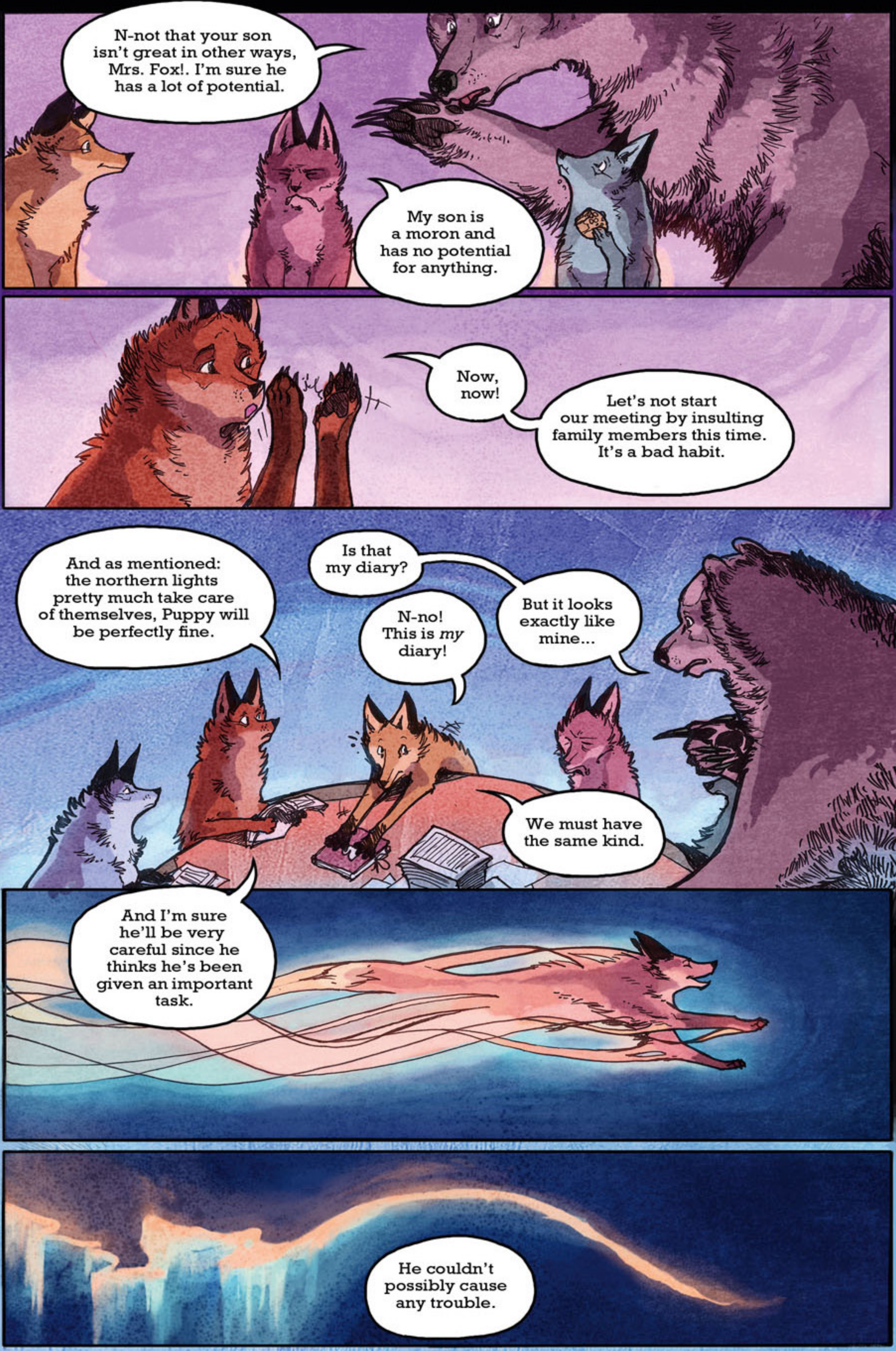
prologue

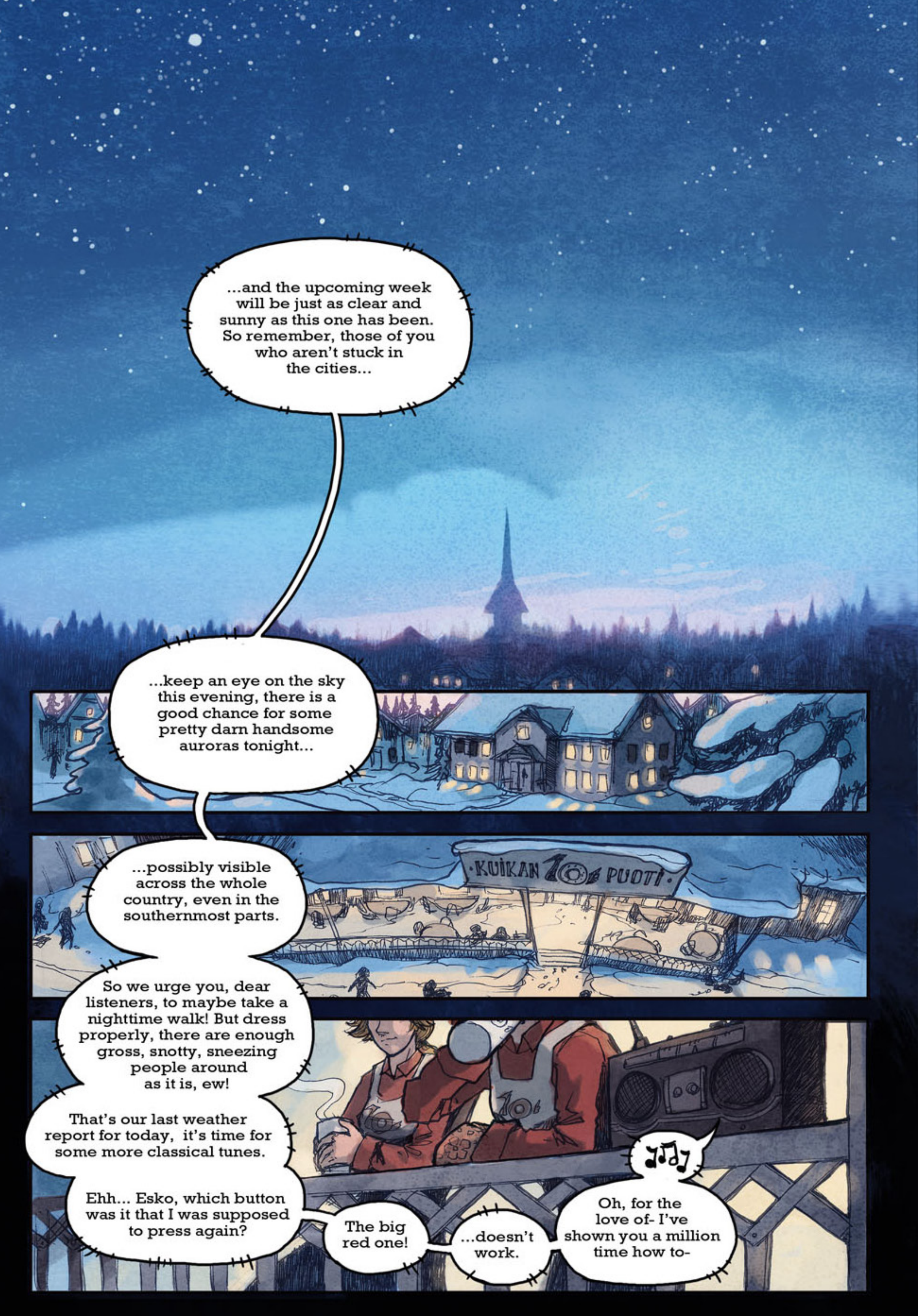

Alright!
I hereby declare this year's annual Fox-meeting open. Did everyone bring their share of documents?
I found these heavy folders and assumed they contained something important, so I brought them.
I stole Mr. Bear's journal. Let's read it during breaks!
Well done! Honey-Fox, did you remember to bring snacks?
I sure did! Buns, straight from Mr. Moose's oven.
Are they gluten-free? You know I can't have anything with gluten!
Yum! Moose's buns are the best!
Sorry we're almost late! The traffic on the Bird's Path is unbelievable!
Hey, buns!
This year there's not a single thing in these that any one of us can't eat.
No lactose, no nuts, no apples, no cinnamon and *no gluten!*
Only pure deliciousness without side effects! (Except obesity.)

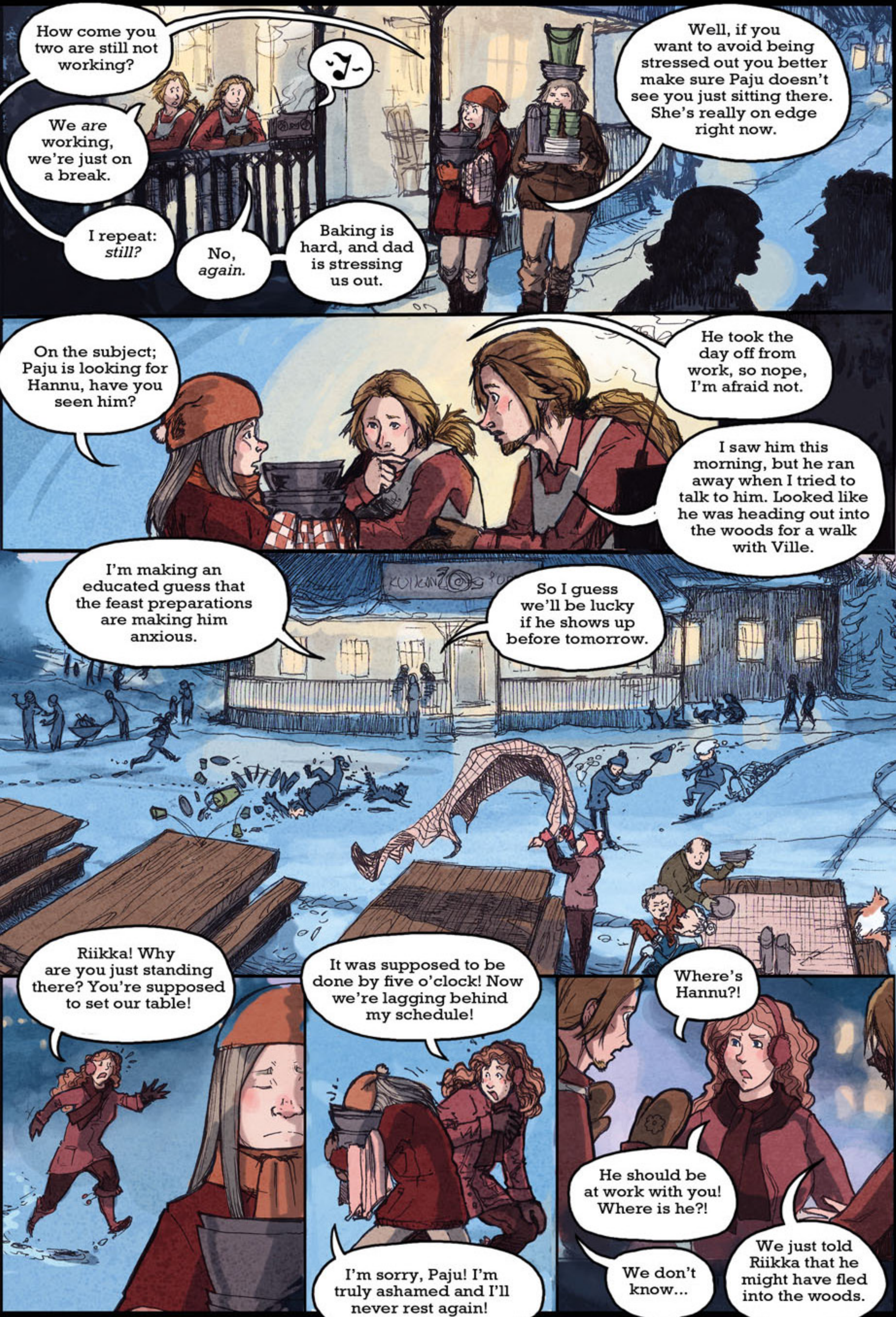

What about raisins?
I think I might be allergic to them.
And *no* raisins! The buns are completely...
-g-gone?
Hey! Where did they go?!?
Oh, excuse me! They looked so irresistible, I just couldn't help myself.
What are you even doing here?!
Who invited Mr. Bear?
Heh, I kind of did. He wanted to come and we had a spare seat, so...
Why on earth would you want to attend our clan meeting? Even the wildest rumours about our business here are deathly boring.
The buns were the only good part!
I'm so sorry! And I really *do* want to join in on your...fun. I'm bored to death by myself too.
All my little bears are hibernating, so I have nothing to do when I'm alone!
Except eating, and I've gained enough weight as it is!

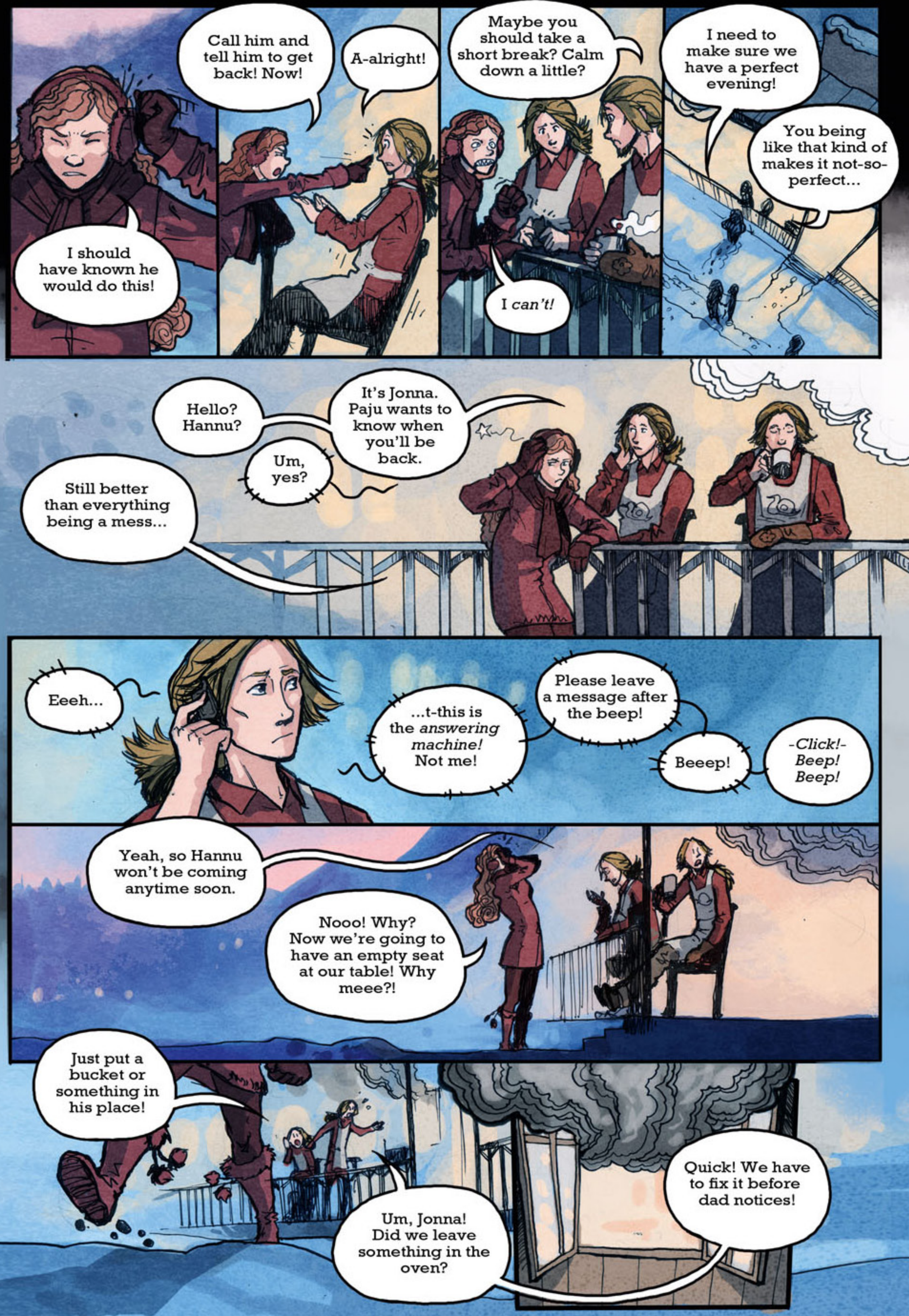

So you decided to come eat our food too?
How will we survive the week now?
PUFF!
I made sure we won't run out of sweets this year.
You're a hero! How many of these do we have?
Shoo! Paws off!
Many!
Yesterday I remembered that I was supposed to take care of the food, so I went to Mr. Moose to beg for a baking-miracle.
I asked if he could possibly bake all of us enough buns to last the whole week in just one day, and he said:
"For one week? I can make you buns for a whole month!"
And he did!
I don't know how he makes these, but they're so good that I would eat them even if the secret ingredient was manure.
I wouldn't!
Okay, yes, I would.

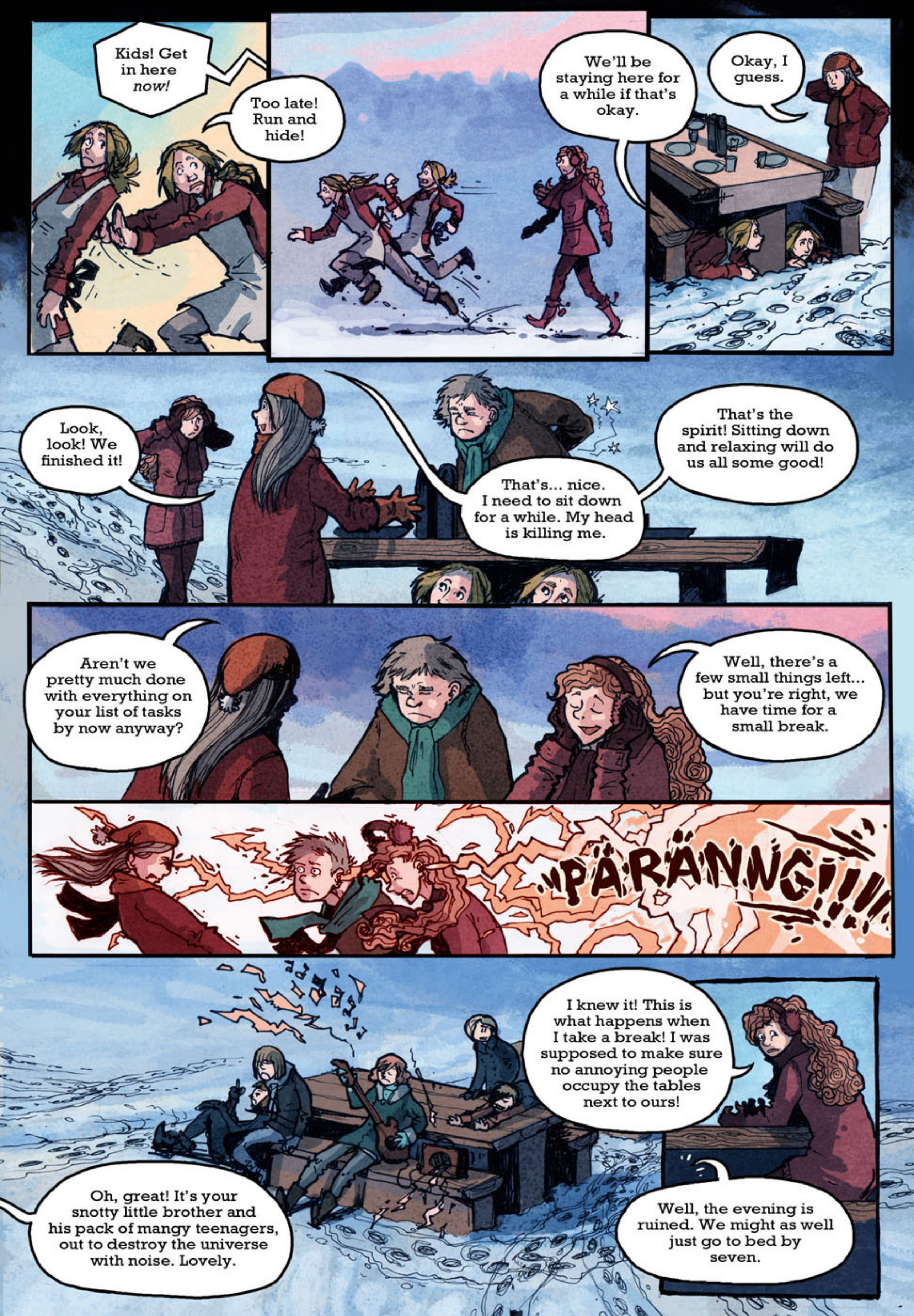

By the way, whose seat is this? Shouldn't you Foxes have all eight of you present for the meeting?
That's Puppy-Fox's seat. We gave him some busy-work to keep him away this week.
He's on northern lights duty.
Him? Unsupervised?
That kid would have done nothing but whine the whole time here.
This way we get some peace and maybe we'll be done faster.
But is it wise to leave him alone with the lights?
Don't you guys usually do that in groups?
Bah, pure formality.
The auroras are really stable, they would be just fine without anyone taking care of them for months.
And by letting Puppy- Fox think he's been given an important job to do, we avoid hurting his feelings.
We *should* hurt his feelings! He'll never mature with all this coddling!
Agreed. As things are now I wouldn't even let that kid water my flowers, he would just set them on fire instead! By accident or not.

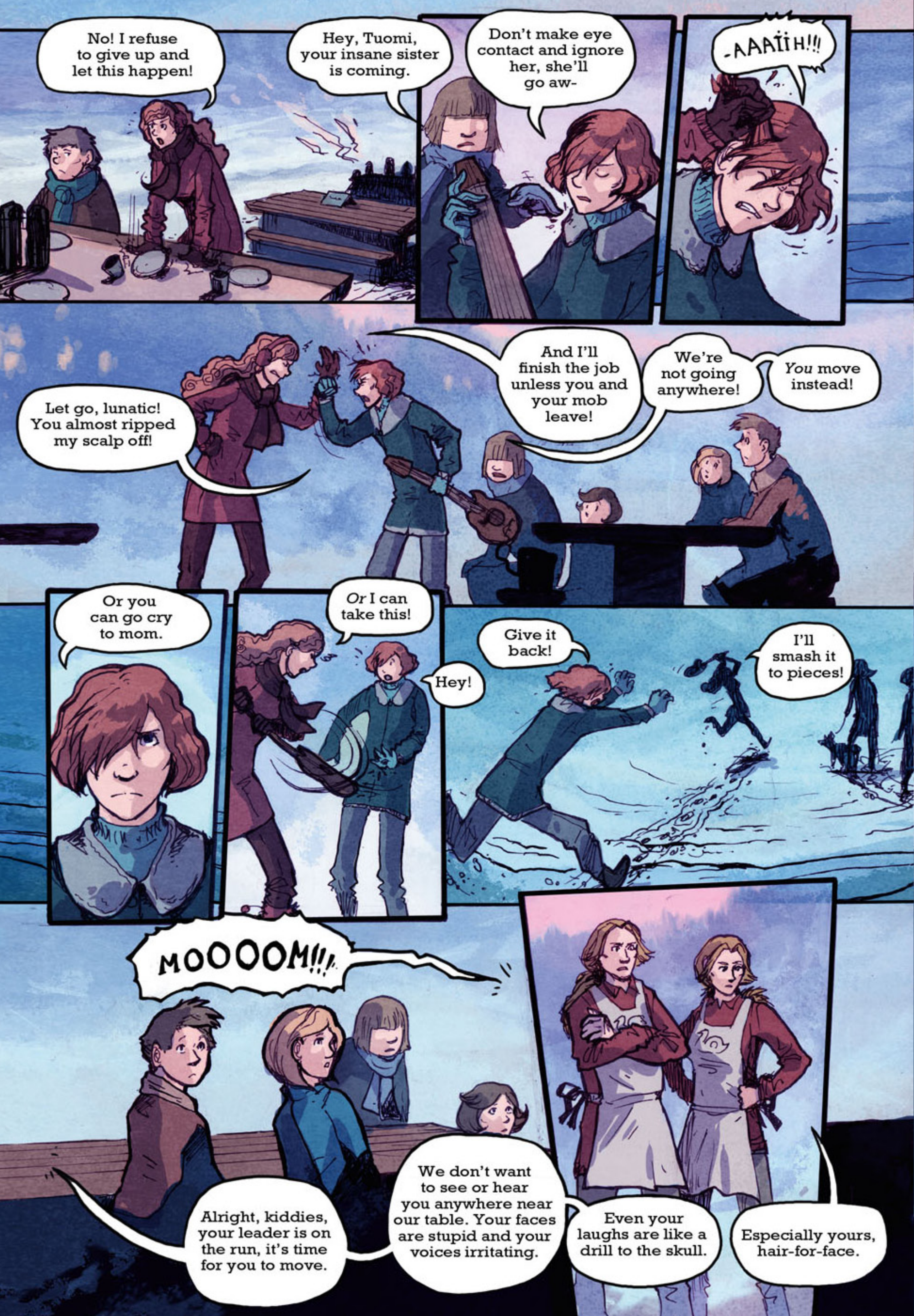

N-not that your son isn't great in other ways, Mrs. Fox!. I'm sure he has a lot of potential.
My son is a moron and has no potential for anything.
Now, now!
Let's not start our meeting by insulting family members this time. It's a bad habit.
And as mentioned: the northern lights pretty much take care of themselves, Puppy will be perfectly fine.
Is that my diary?
N-no! This is *my* diary!
But it looks exactly like mine...
We must have the same kind.
And I'm sure he'll be very careful since he thinks he's been given an important task.
He couldn't possibly cause any trouble.

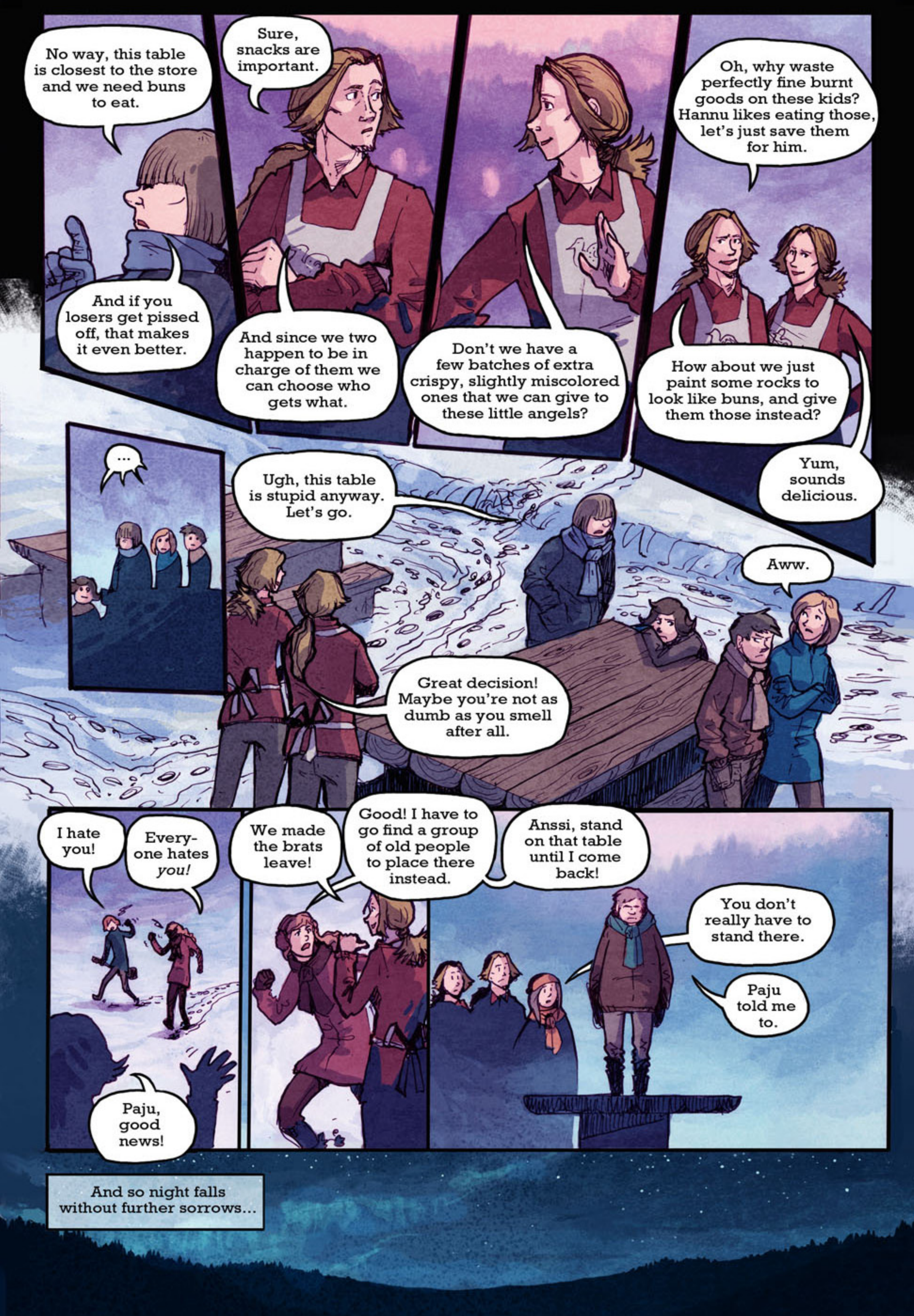

...and the upcoming week will be just as clear and sunny as this one has been. So remember, those of you who aren't stuck in the cities...
...keep an eye on the sky this evening, there is a good chance for some pretty darn handsome auroras tonight...
KUIKAN PUOTI
...possibly visible across the whole country, even in the southernmost parts.
So we urge you, dear listeners, to maybe take a nighttime walk! But dress properly, there are enough gross, snotty, sneezing people around as it is, ew!
That's our last weather report for today, it's time for some more classical tunes.
Ehh... Esko, which button was it that I was supposed to press again?
The big red one!
...doesn't work.
Oh, for the love of- I've shown you a million time how to-

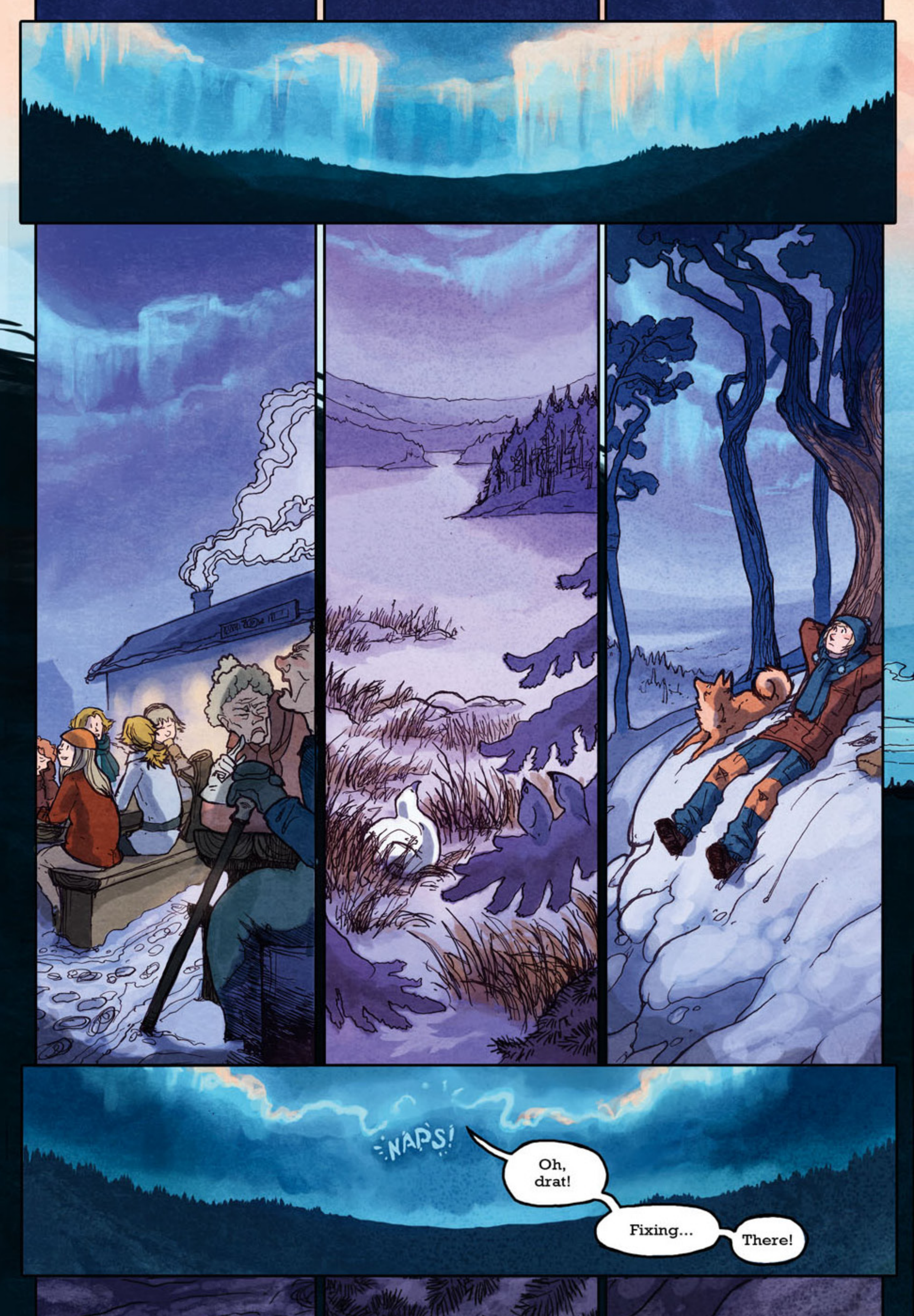

How come you two are still not working?
We *are* working, we're just on a break.
I repeat: *still?*
No, *again.*
Baking is hard, and dad is stressing us out.
Well, if you want to avoid being stressed out you better make sure Paju doesn't see you just sitting there. She's really on edge right now.
On the subject; Paju is looking for Hannu, have you seen him?
He took the day off from work, so nope, I'm afraid not.
I saw him this morning, but he ran away when I tried to talk to him. Looked like he was heading out into the woods for a walk with Ville.
I'm making an educated guess that the feast preparations are making him anxious.
So I guess we'll be lucky if he shows up before tomorrow.
Riikka! Why are you just standing there? You're supposed to set our table!
It was supposed to be done by five o'clock! Now we're lagging behind my schedule!
I'm sorry, Paju! I'm truly ashamed and I'll never rest again!
Where's Hannu?!
He should be at work with you! Where is he?!
We don't know...
We just told Riikka that he might have fled into the woods.

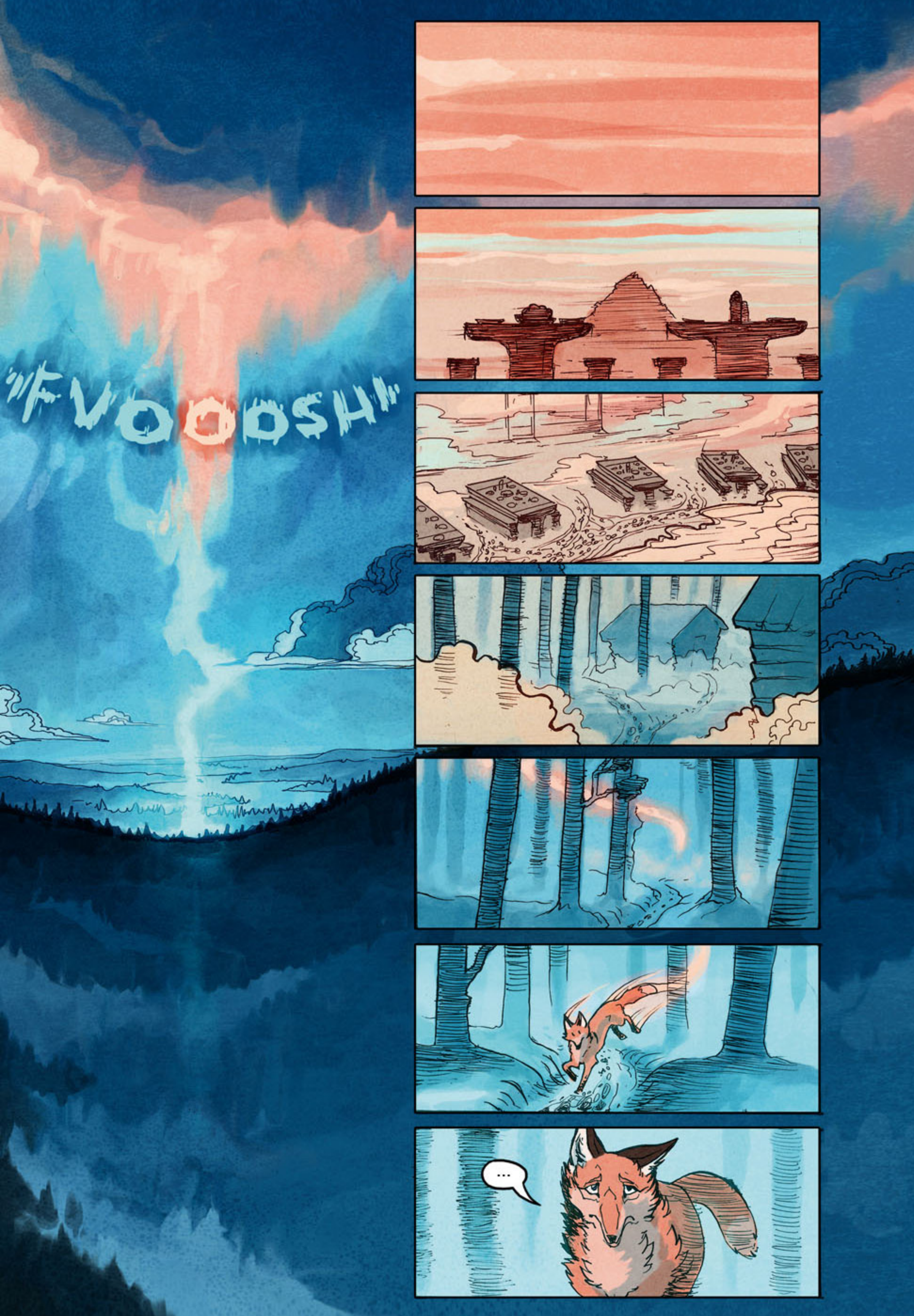

I should have known he would do this!
Call him and tell him to get back! Now!
A-alright!
Maybe you should take a short break? Calm down a little?
I *can't!*
I need to make sure we have a perfect evening!
You being like that kind of makes it not-so-perfect...
Hello? Hannu?
Um, yes?
It's Jonna. Paju wants to know when you'll be back.
Still better than everything being a mess...
Eeeh...
...t-this is the *answering machine!* Not me!
Please leave a message after the beep!
Beeep!
-Click!- Beep! Beep!
Yeah, so Hannu won't be coming anytime soon.
Nooo! Why? Now we're going to have an empty seat at our table! Why meee?!
Just put a bucket or something in his place!
Um, Jonna! Did we leave something in the oven?
Quick! We have to fix it before dad notices!

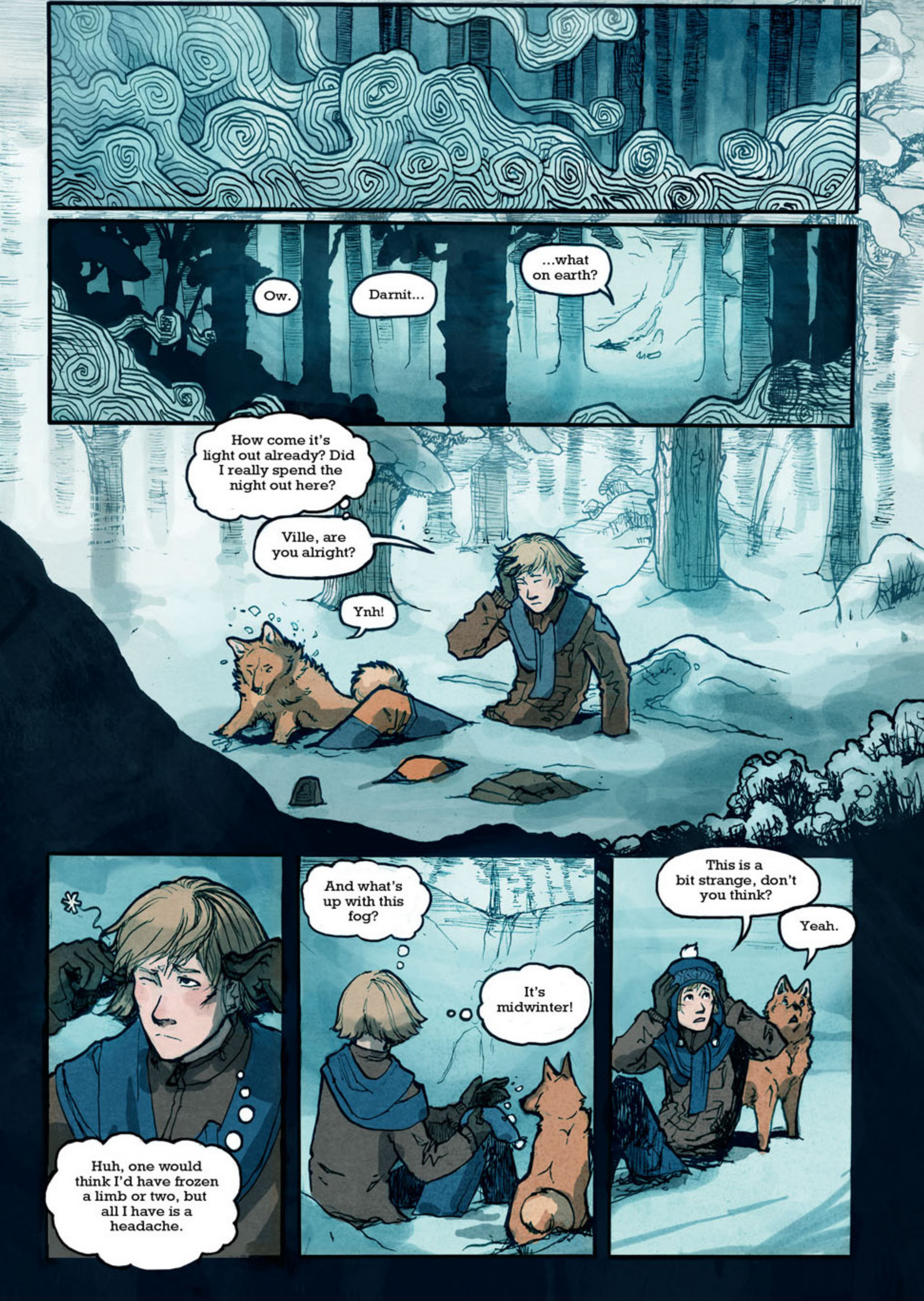

Kids! Get in here *now!*
Too late! Run and hide!
We'll be staying here for a while if that's okay.
Okay, I guess.
Look, look! We finished it!
That's... nice. I need to sit down for a while. My head is killing me.
That's the spirit! Sitting down and relaxing will do us all some good!
Aren't we pretty much done with everything on your list of tasks by now anyway?
Well, there's a few small things left... but you're right, we have time for a small break.
PÄRÄNNG!!!!
I knew it! This is what happens when I take a break! I was supposed to make sure no annoying people occupy the tables next to ours!
Oh, great! It's your snotty little brother and his pack of mangy teenagers, out to destroy the universe with noise. Lovely.
Well, the evening is ruined. We might as well just go to bed by seven.

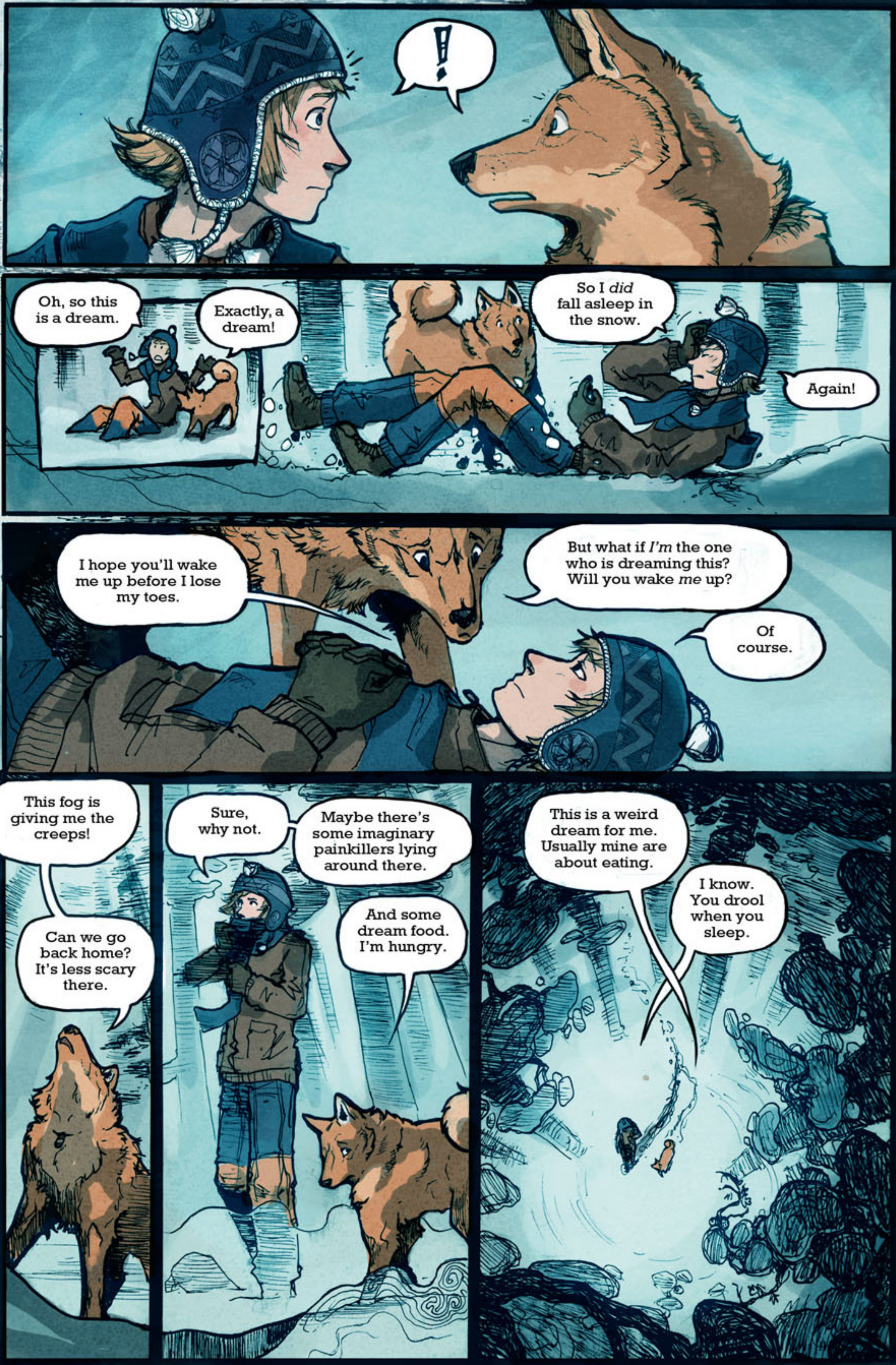

No! I refuse to give up and let this happen!
Hey, Tuomi, your insane sister is coming.
Don't make eye contact and ignore her, she'll go aw-
-AAAIIH!!!
Let go, lunatic! You almost ripped my scalp off!
And I'll finish the job unless you and your mob leave!
We're not going anywhere!
You move instead!
Or you can go cry to mom.
Or I can take this!
Hey!
Give it back!
I'll smash it to pieces!
MOOOOM!!!
Alright, kiddies, your leader is on the run, it's time for you to move.
We don't want to see or hear you anywhere near our table. Your faces are stupid and your voices irritating.
Even your laughs are like a drill to the skull.
Especially yours, hair-for-face.

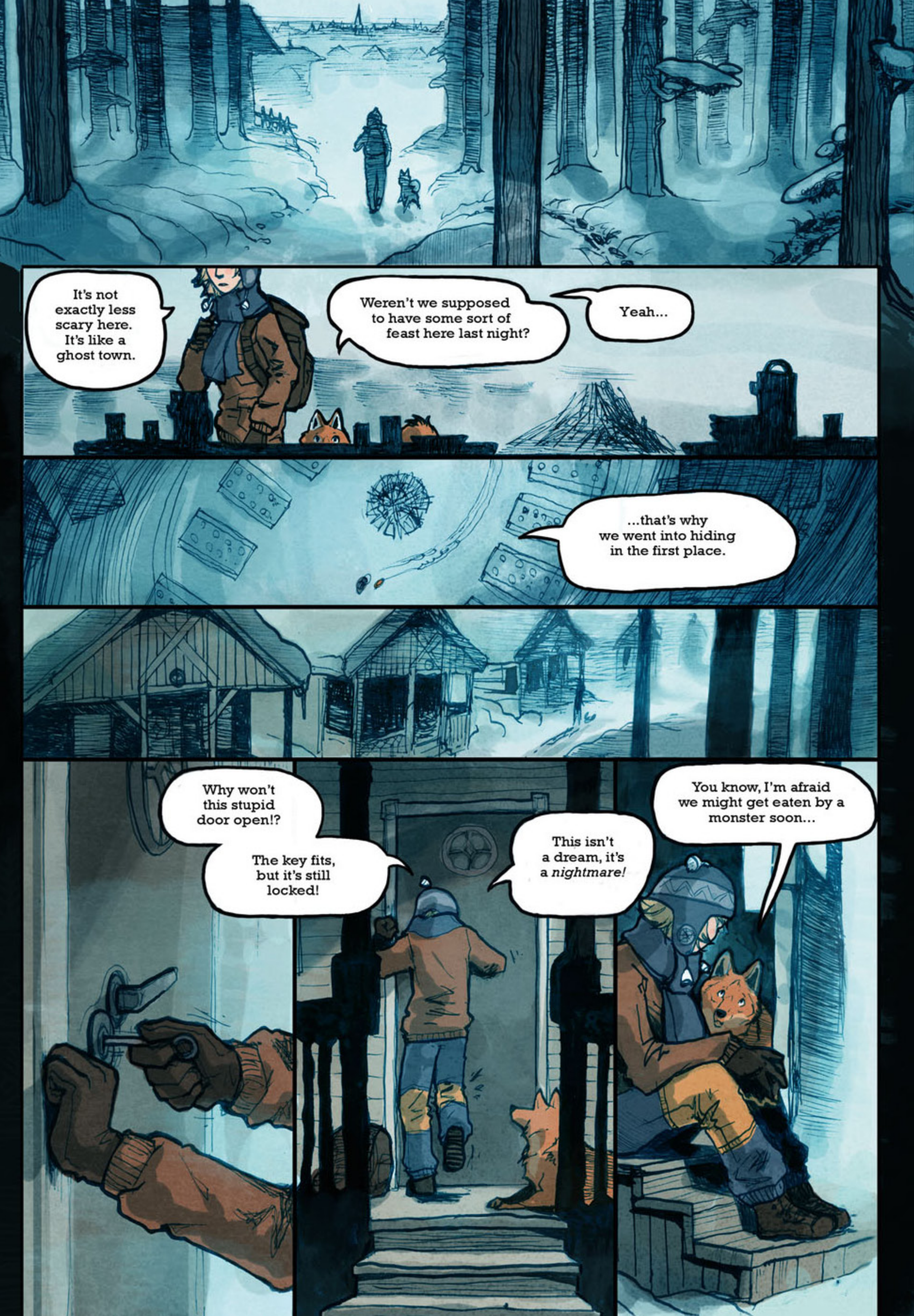

No way, this table is closest to the store and we need buns to eat.
And if you losers get pissed off, that makes it even better.
Sure, snacks are important.
And since we two happen to be in charge of them we can choose who gets what.
Don't we have a few batches of extra crispy, slightly miscolored ones that we can give to these little angels?
Oh, why waste perfectly fine burnt goods on these kids? Hannu likes eating those, let's just save them for him.
How about we just paint some rocks to look like buns, and give them those instead?
Yum, sounds delicious.
...
Ugh, this table is stupid anyway. Let's go.
Aww.
Great decision! Maybe you're not as dumb as you smell after all.
I hate you!
Every-one hates *you!*
Paju, good news!
We made the brats leave!
Good! I have to go find a group of old people to place there instead.
Anssi, stand on that table until I come back!
You don't really have to stand there.
Paju told me to.
And so night falls without further sorrows...

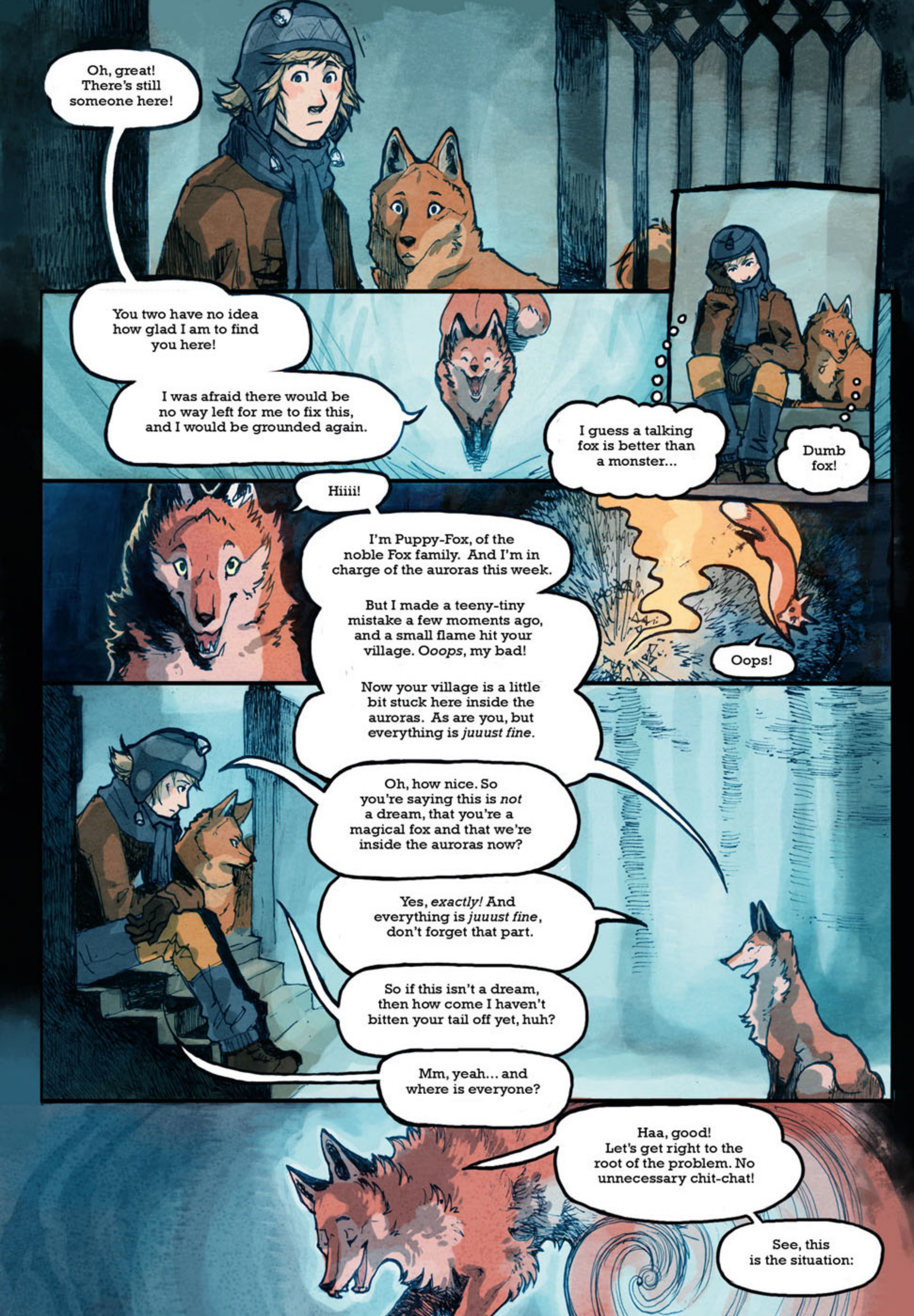

NAPS!
Oh, drat!
Fixing...
There!

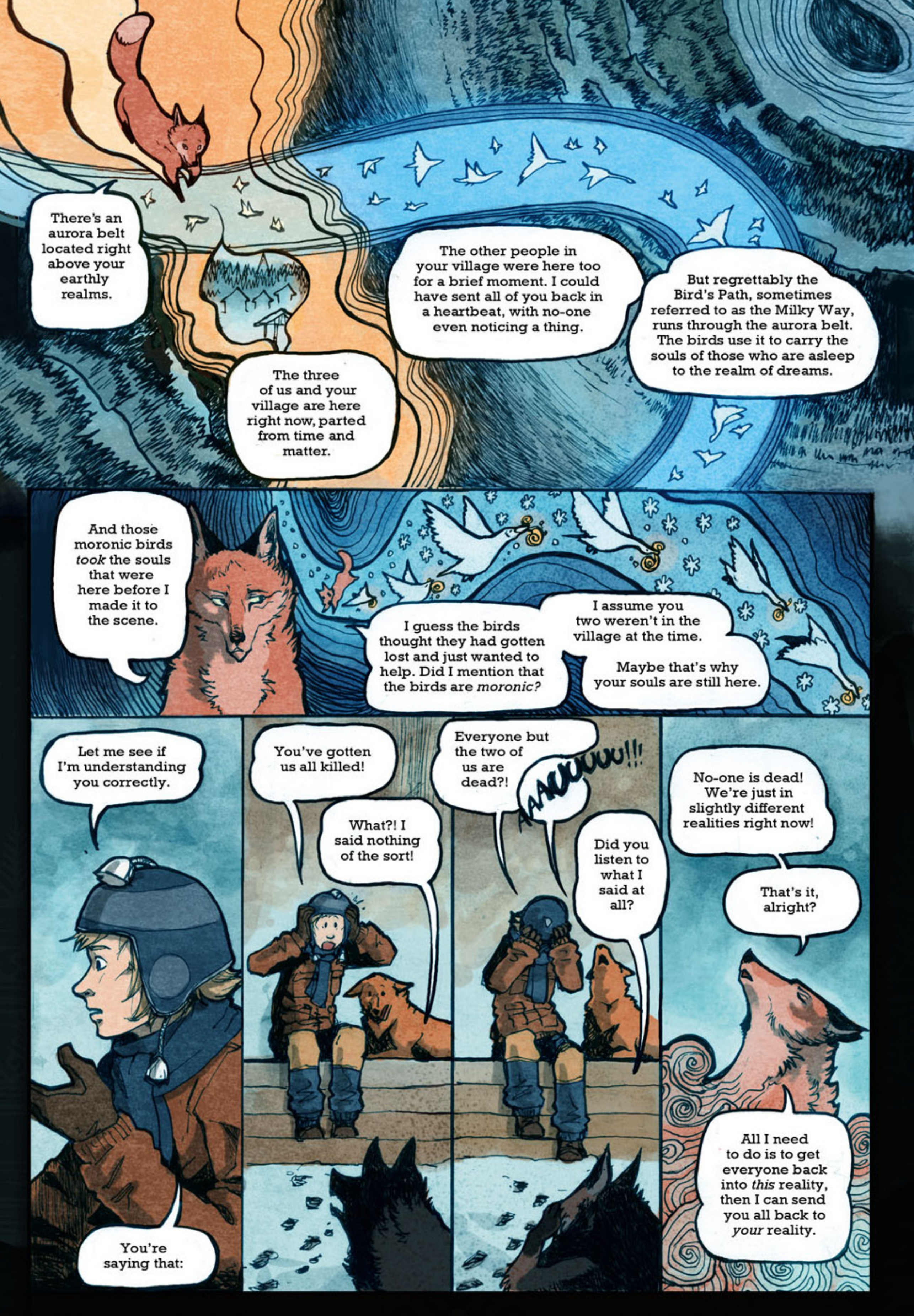

FVOOOSH
...

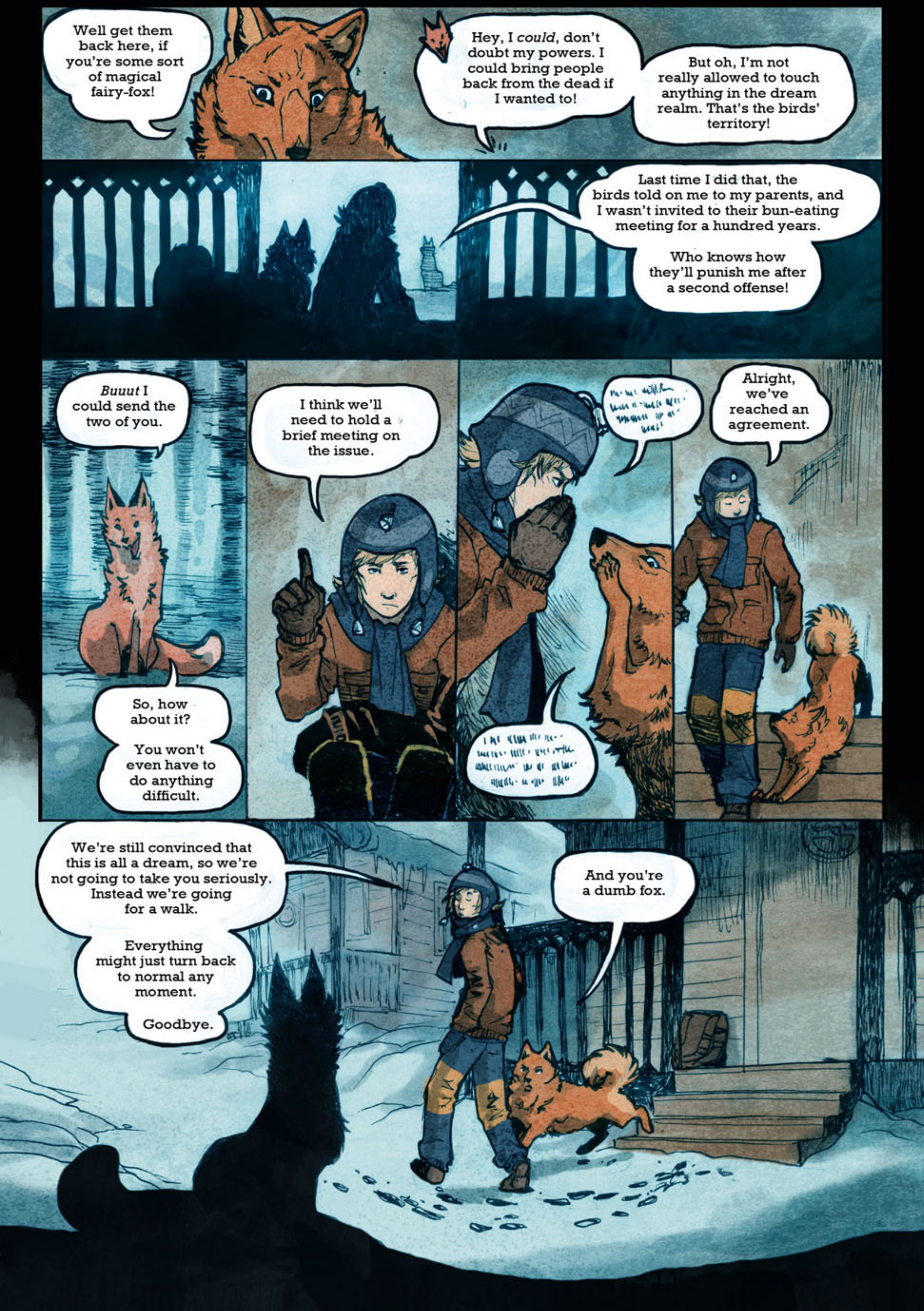

Ow.
Darnit...
...what on earth?
How come it's light out already? Did I really spend the night out here?
Ville, are you alright?
Ynh!
Huh, one would think I'd have frozen a limb or two, but all I have is a headache.
And what's up with this fog?
It's midwinter!
This is a bit strange, don't you think?
Yeah.

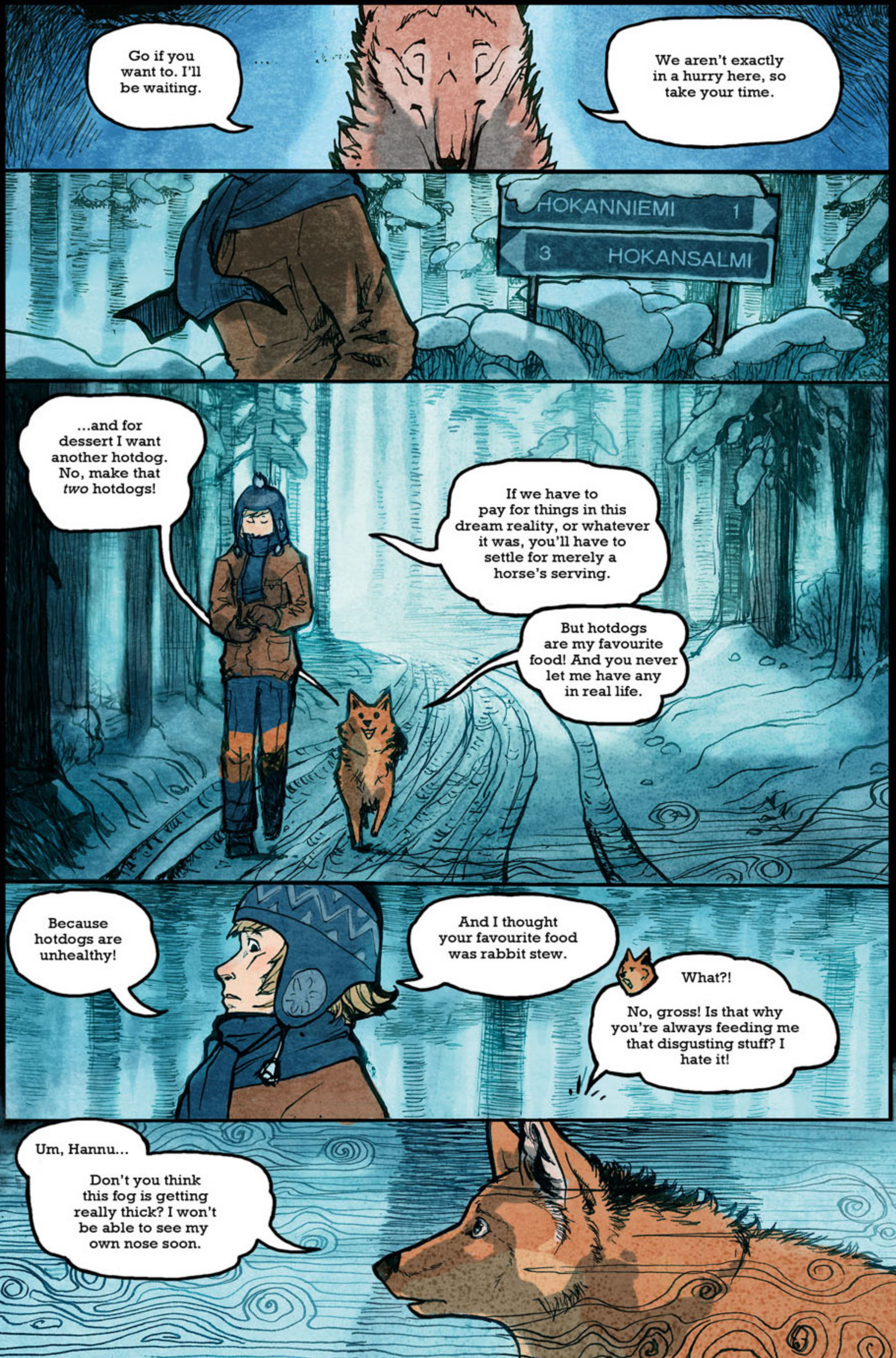

!
Oh, so this is a dream.
Exactly, a dream!
So I *did* fall asleep in the snow.
Again!
I hope you'll wake me up before I lose my toes.
But what if *I'm* the one who is dreaming this? Will you wake *me* up?
Of course.
This fog is giving me the creeps!
Can we go back home? It's less scary there.
Sure, why not.
Maybe there's some imaginary painkillers lying around there.
And some dream food. I'm hungry.
This is a weird dream for me. Usually mine are about eating.
I know. You drool when you sleep.

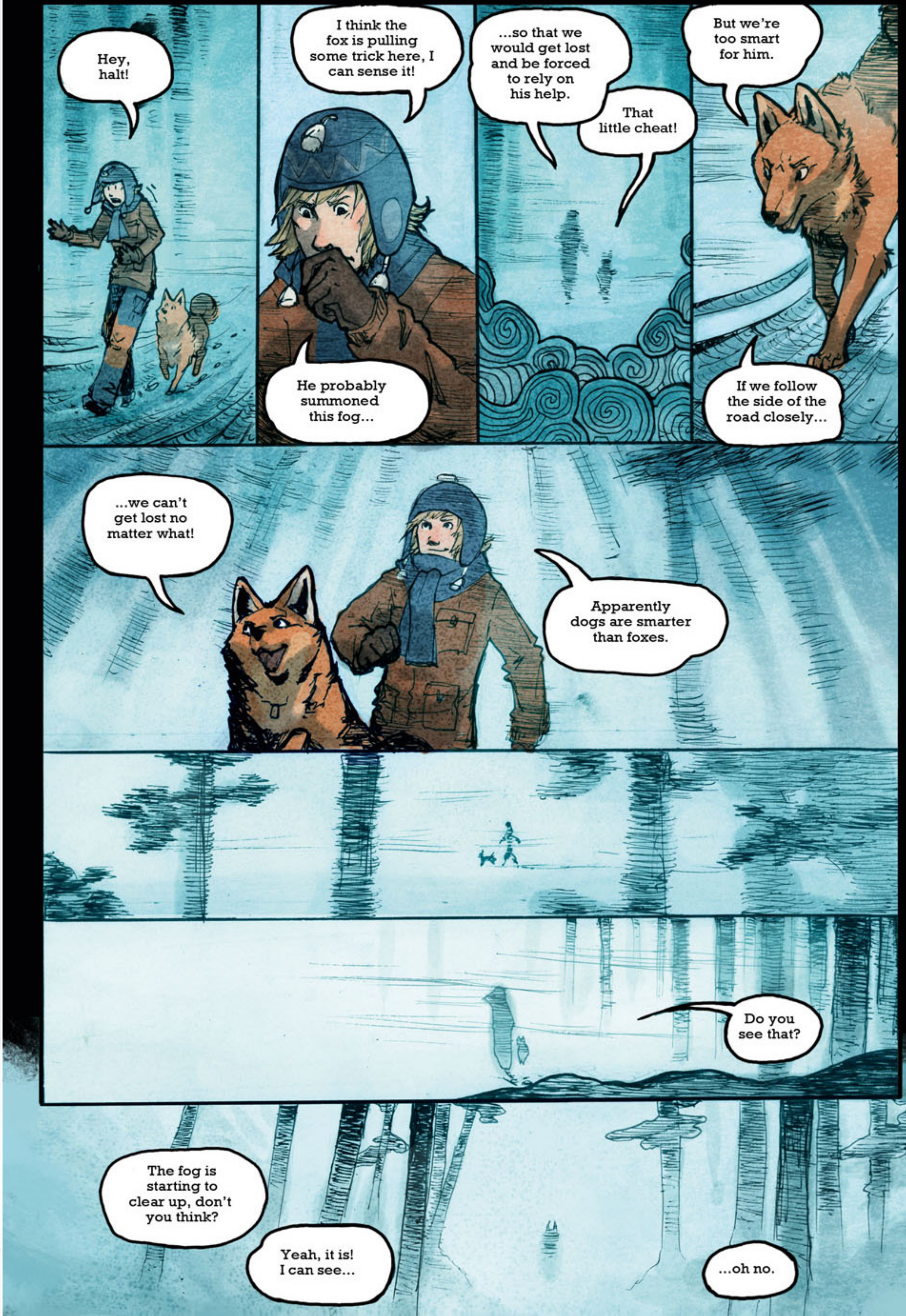

It's not exactly less scary here. It's like a ghost town.
Weren't we supposed to have some sort of feast here last night?
Yeah...
...that's why we went into hiding in the first place.
Why won't this stupid door open!?
The key fits, but it's still locked!
This isn't a dream, it's a *nightmare!*
You know, I'm afraid we might get eaten by a monster soon...

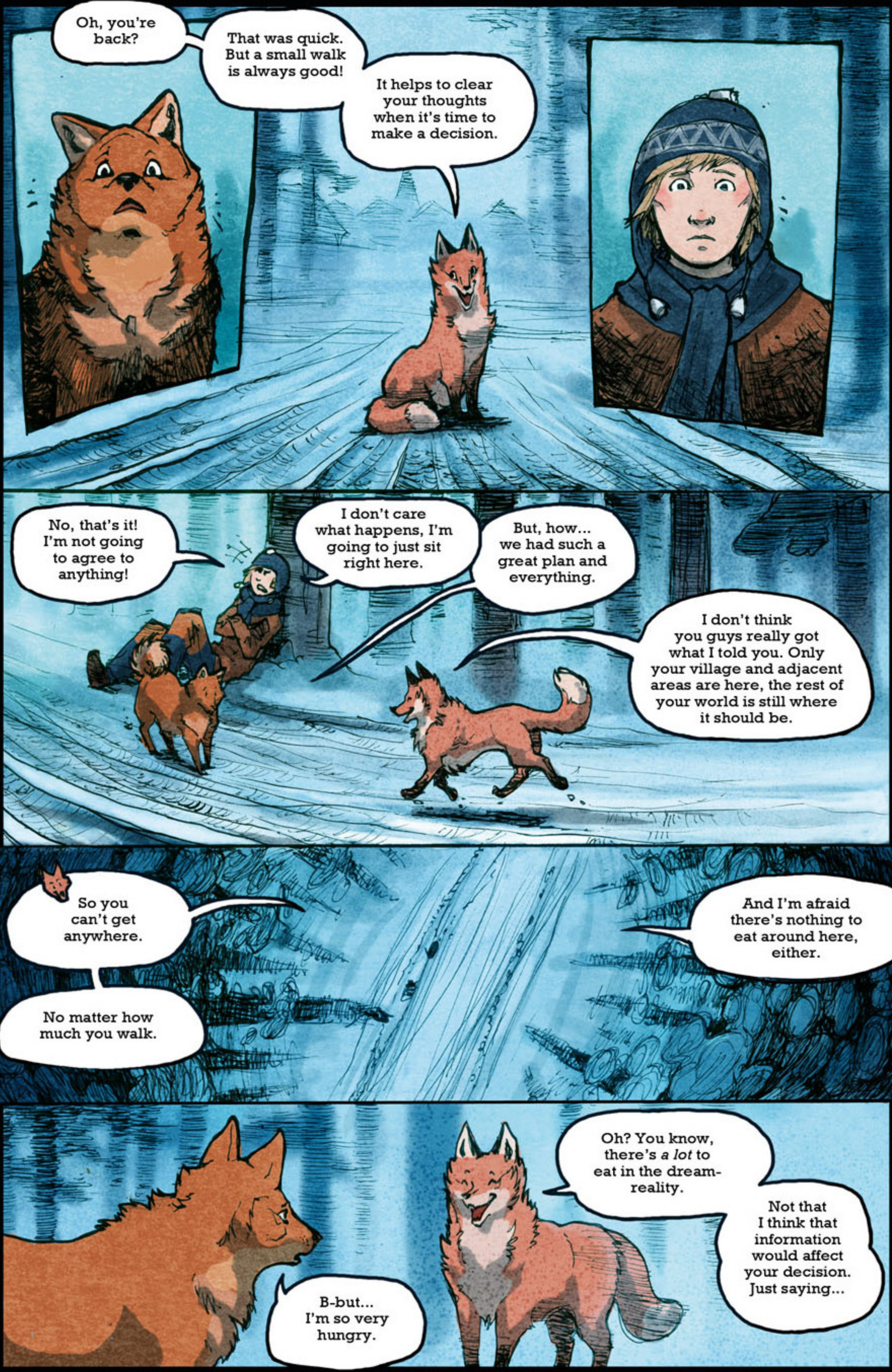

Oh, great! There's still someone here!
You two have no idea how glad I am to find you here!
I was afraid there would be no way left for me to fix this, and I would be grounded again.
I guess a talking fox is better than a monster...
Dumb fox!
Hiiii!
I'm Puppy-Fox, of the noble Fox family. And I'm in charge of the auroras this week.
But I made a teeny-tiny mistake a few moments ago, and a small flame hit your village. Ooops, my bad!
Oops!
Now your village is a little bit stuck here inside the auroras. As are you, but everything is juuust fine.
Oh, how nice. So you're saying this is not a dream, that you're a magical fox and that we're inside the auroras now?
Yes, exactly! And everything is juuust fine, don't forget that part.
So if this isn't a dream, then how come I haven't bitten your tail off yet, huh?
Mm, yeah... and where is everyone?
Haa, good! Let's get right to the root of the problem. No unnecessary chit-chat!
See, this is the situation:

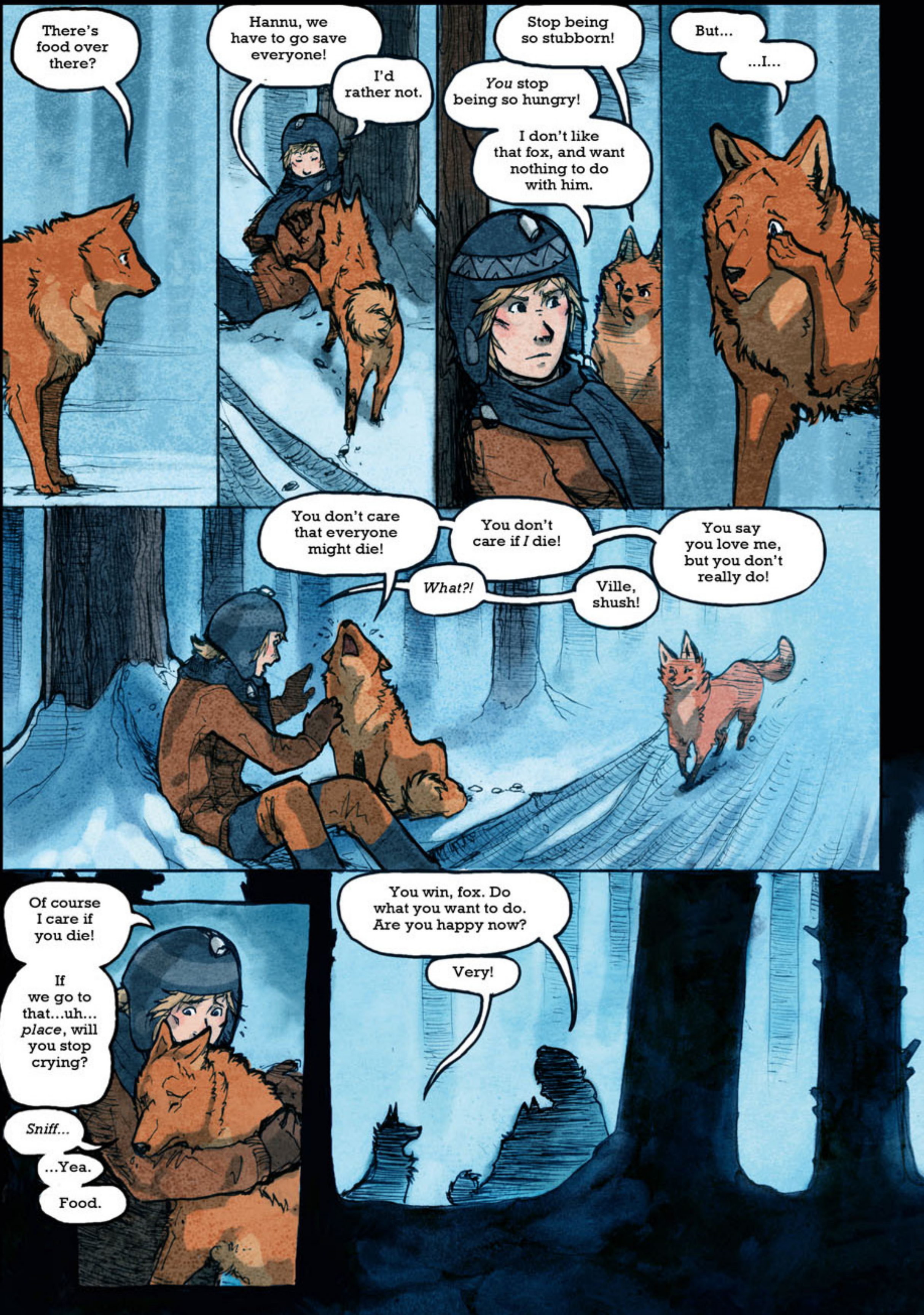

There's an aurora belt located right above your earthly realms.
The three of us and your village are here right now, parted from time and matter.
The other people in your village were here too for a brief moment. I could have sent all of you back in a heartbeat, with no-one even noticing a thing.
But regrettably the Bird's Path, sometimes referred to as the Milky Way, runs through the aurora belt. The birds use it to carry the souls of those who are asleep to the realm of dreams.
And those moronic birds *took* the souls that were here before I made it to the scene.
I guess the birds thought they had gotten lost and just wanted to help. Did I mention that the birds are *moronic?*
I assume you two weren't in the village at the time.
Maybe that's why your souls are still here.
Let me see if I'm understanding you correctly.
You're saying that:
You've gotten us all killed!
What?! I said nothing of the sort!
Everyone but the two of us are dead?!
AAAUUUUUU!!!
Did you listen to what I said at all?
No-one is dead! We're just in slightly different realities right now!
That's it, alright?
All I need to do is to get everyone back into *this* reality, then I can send you all back to *your* reality.

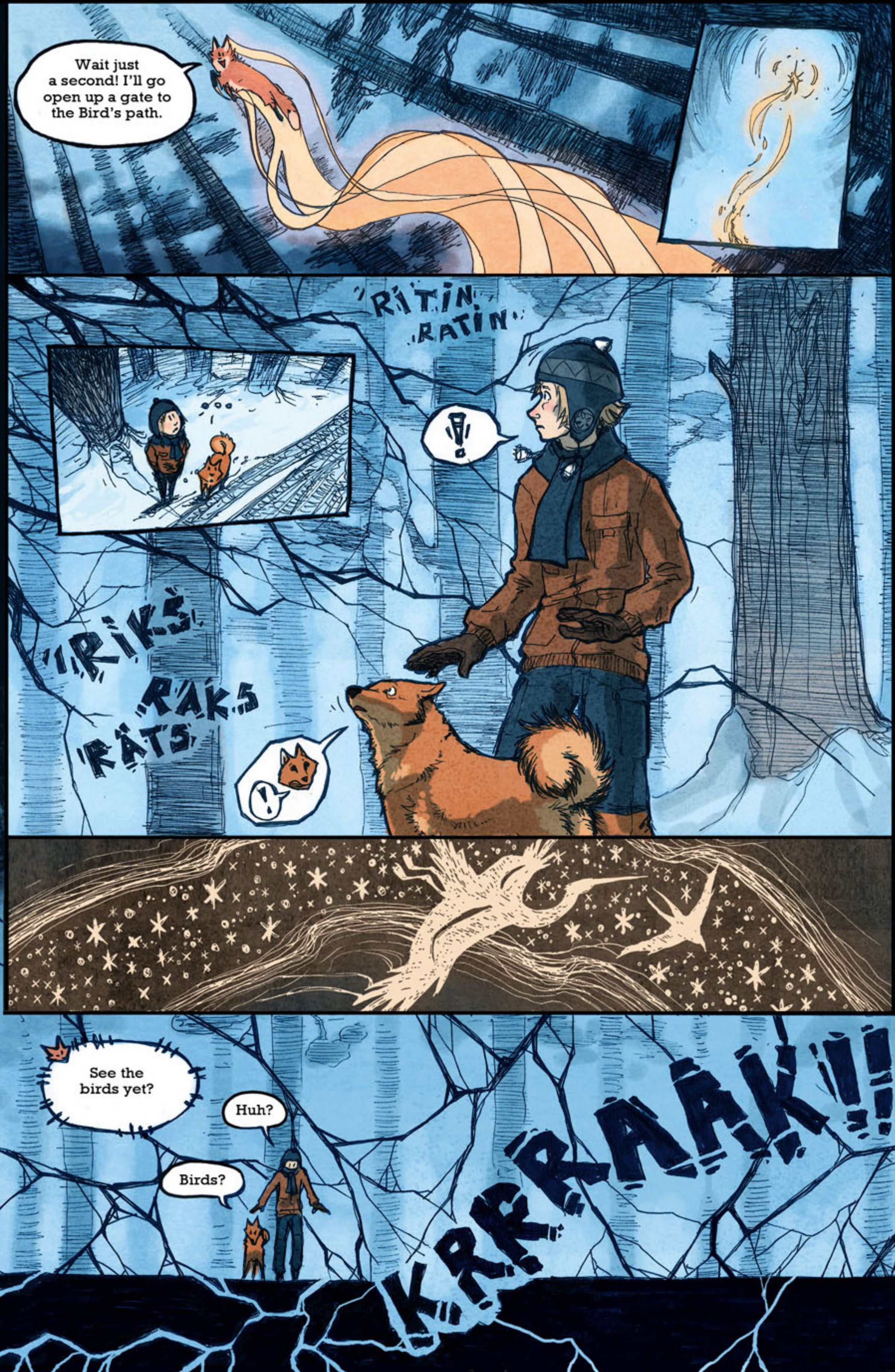

Well get them back here, if you're some sort of magical fairy-fox!
Hey, I *could*, don't doubt my powers. I could bring people back from the dead if I wanted to!
But oh, I'm not really allowed to touch anything in the dream realm. That's the birds' territory!
Last time I did that, the birds told on me to my parents, and I wasn't invited to their bun-eating meeting for a hundred years.
Who knows how they'll punish me after a second offense!
Buuut I could send the two of you.
So, how about it?
You won't even have to do anything difficult.
I think we'll need to hold a brief meeting on the issue.
Alright, we've reached an agreement.
We're still convinced that this is all a dream, so we're not going to take you seriously. Instead we're going for a walk.
Everything might just turn back to normal any moment.
Goodbye.
And you're a dumb fox.

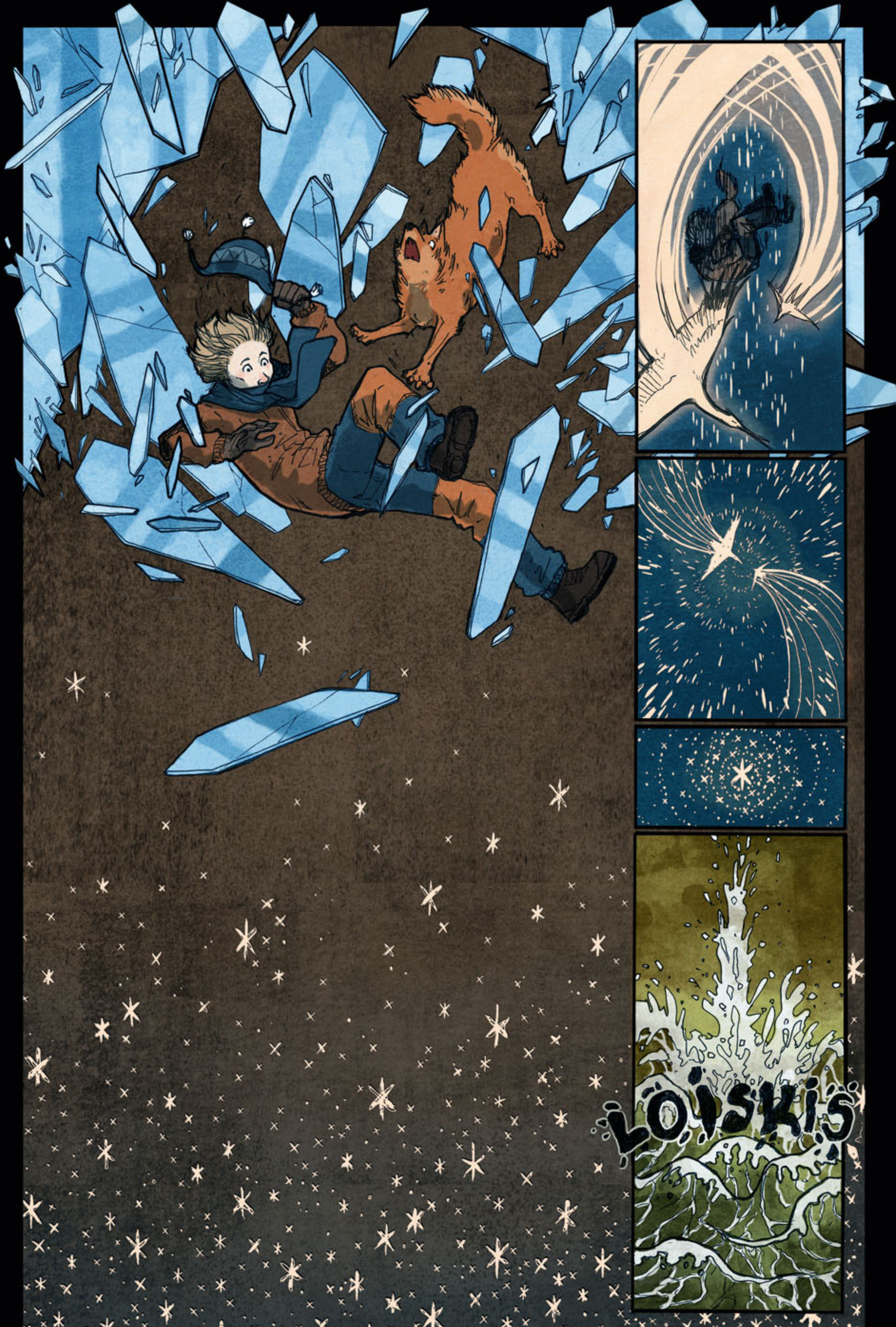

Go if you want to. I'll be waiting.
...
We aren't exactly in a hurry here, so take your time.
HOKANNIEMI 1
3 HOKANSALMI
...and for dessert I want another hotdog. No, make that *two* hotdogs!
If we have to pay for things in this dream reality, or whatever it was, you'll have to settle for merely a horse's serving.
But hotdogs are my favourite food! And you never let me have any in real life.
Because hotdogs are unhealthy!
And I thought your favourite food was rabbit stew.
What?!
No, gross! Is that why you're always feeding me that disgusting stuff? I hate it!
Um, Hannu...
Don't you think this fog is getting really thick? I won't be able to see my own nose soon.


Hey, halt!
I think the fox is pulling some trick here, I can sense it!
He probably summoned this fog…
…so that we would get lost and be forced to rely on his help.
That little cheat!
But we're too smart for him.
If we follow the side of the road closely…
…we can't get lost no matter what!
Apparently dogs are smarter than foxes.
Do you see that?
The fog is starting to clear up, don't you think?
Yeah, it is! I can see…
…oh no.


Oh, you're back?
That was quick. But a small walk is always good!
It helps to clear your thoughts when it's time to make a decision.
No, that's it! I'm not going to agree to anything!
I don't care what happens, I'm going to just sit right here.
But, how... we had such a great plan and everything.
I don't think you guys really got what I told you. Only your village and adjacent areas are here, the rest of your world is still where it should be.
So you can't get anywhere.
No matter how much you walk.
And I'm afraid there's nothing to eat around here, either.
Oh? You know, there's *a lot* to eat in the dream-reality.
Not that I think that information would affect your decision. Just saying...
B-but... I'm so very hungry.

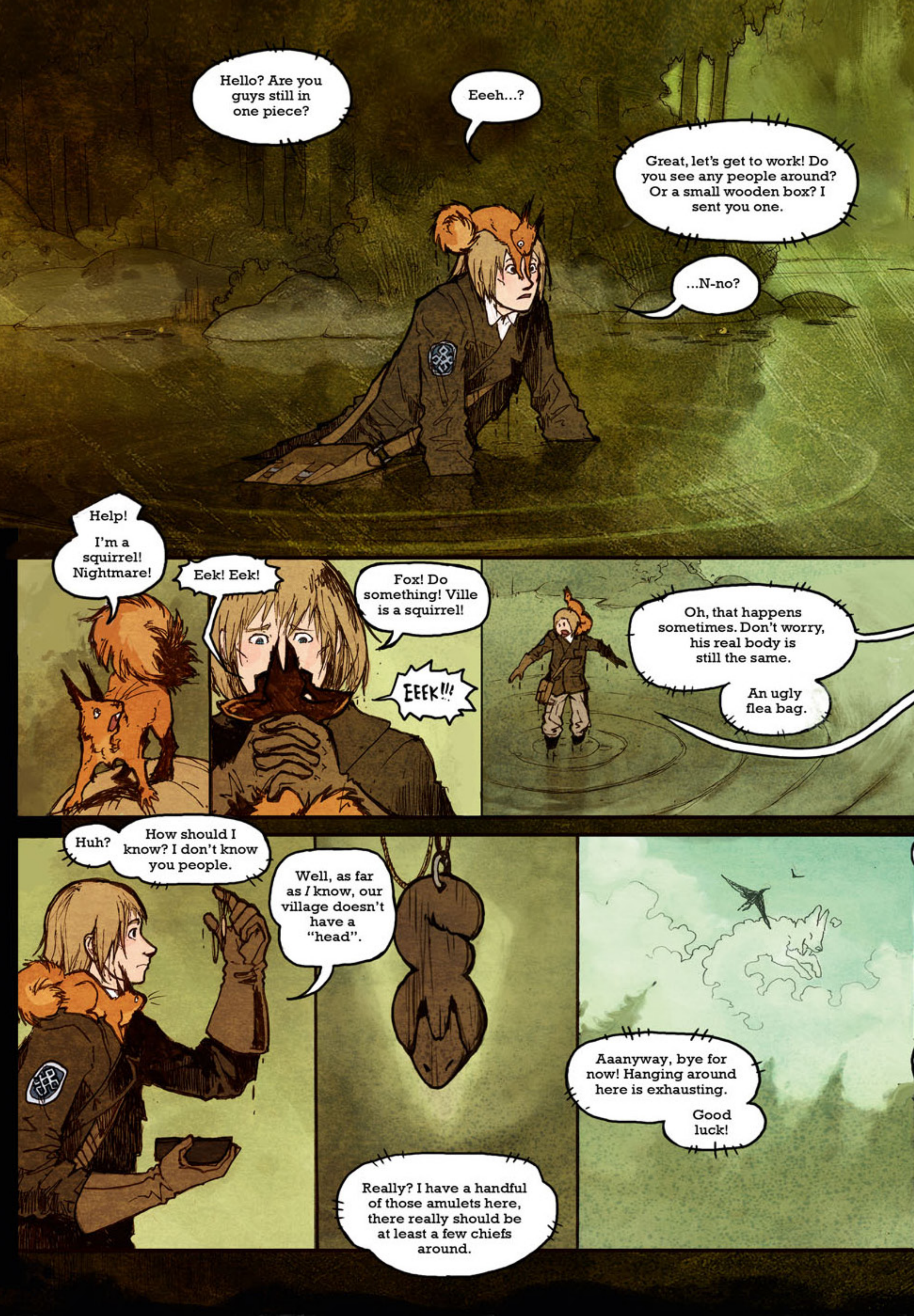

There's food over there?
Hannu, we have to go save everyone!
I'd rather not.
Stop being so stubborn!
You stop being so hungry!
I don't like that fox, and want nothing to do with him.
But...
...I...
You don't care that everyone might die!
You don't care if *I* die!
You say you love me, but you don't really do!
What?!
Ville, shush!
Of course I care if you die!
If we go to that...uh... *place*, will you stop crying?
Sniff...
...Yea.
Food.
You win, fox. Do what you want to do. Are you happy now?
Very!

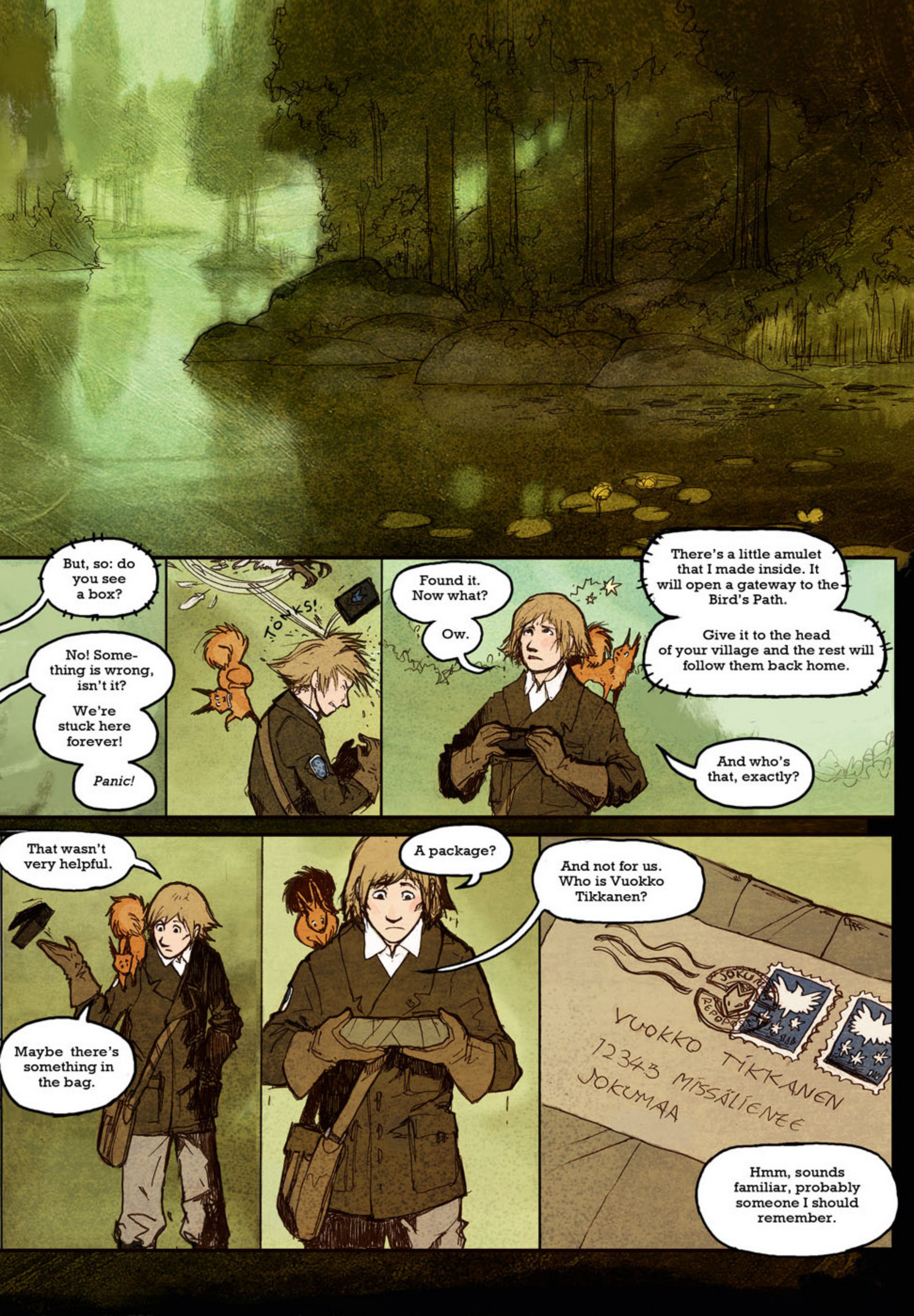

Wait just a second! I'll go open up a gate to the Bird's path.
RITIN RATIN
!
RIKS RAKS RATS
!
See the birds yet?
Huh?
Birds?
KRRRAAK!!!!

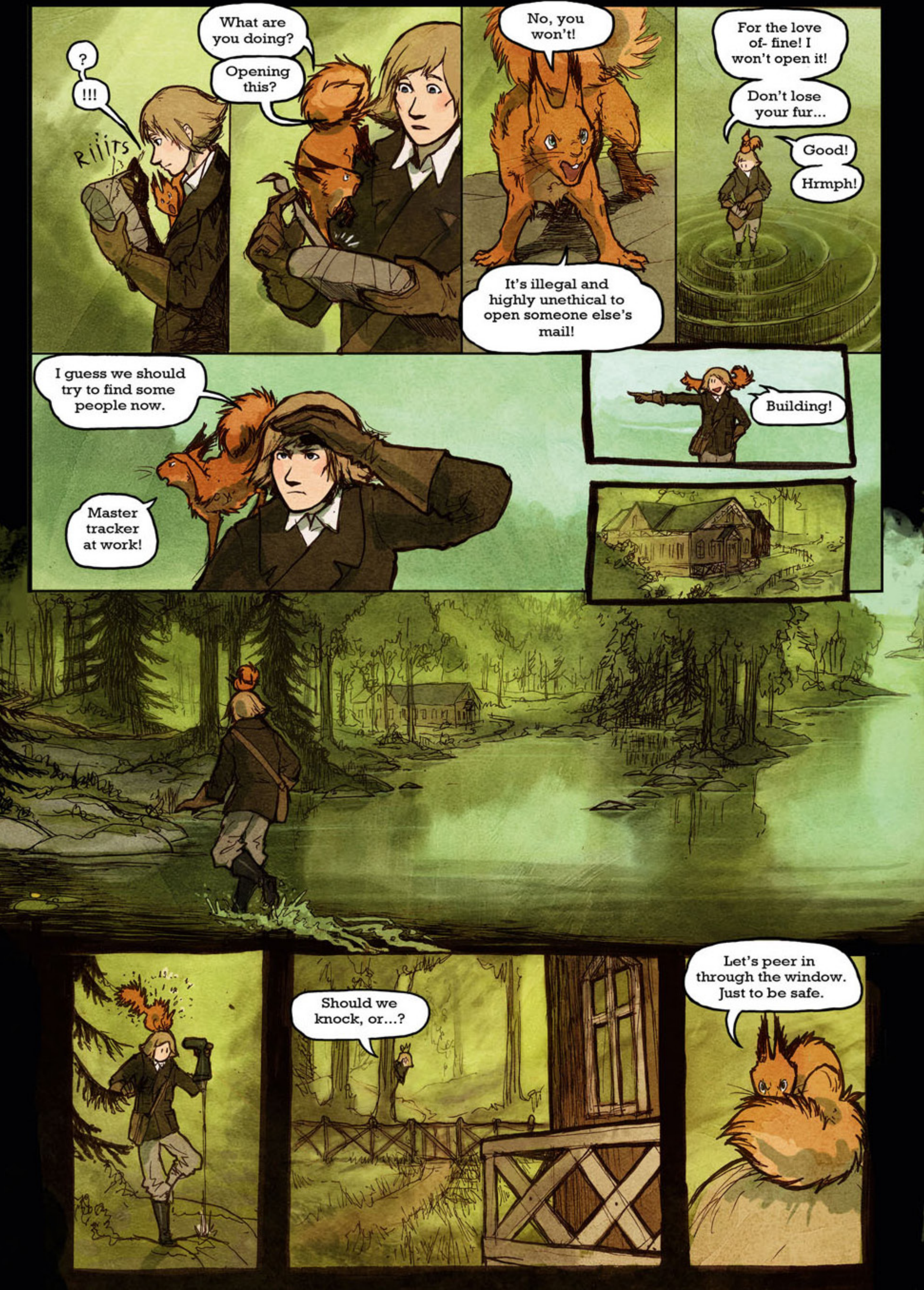

LOISKIS

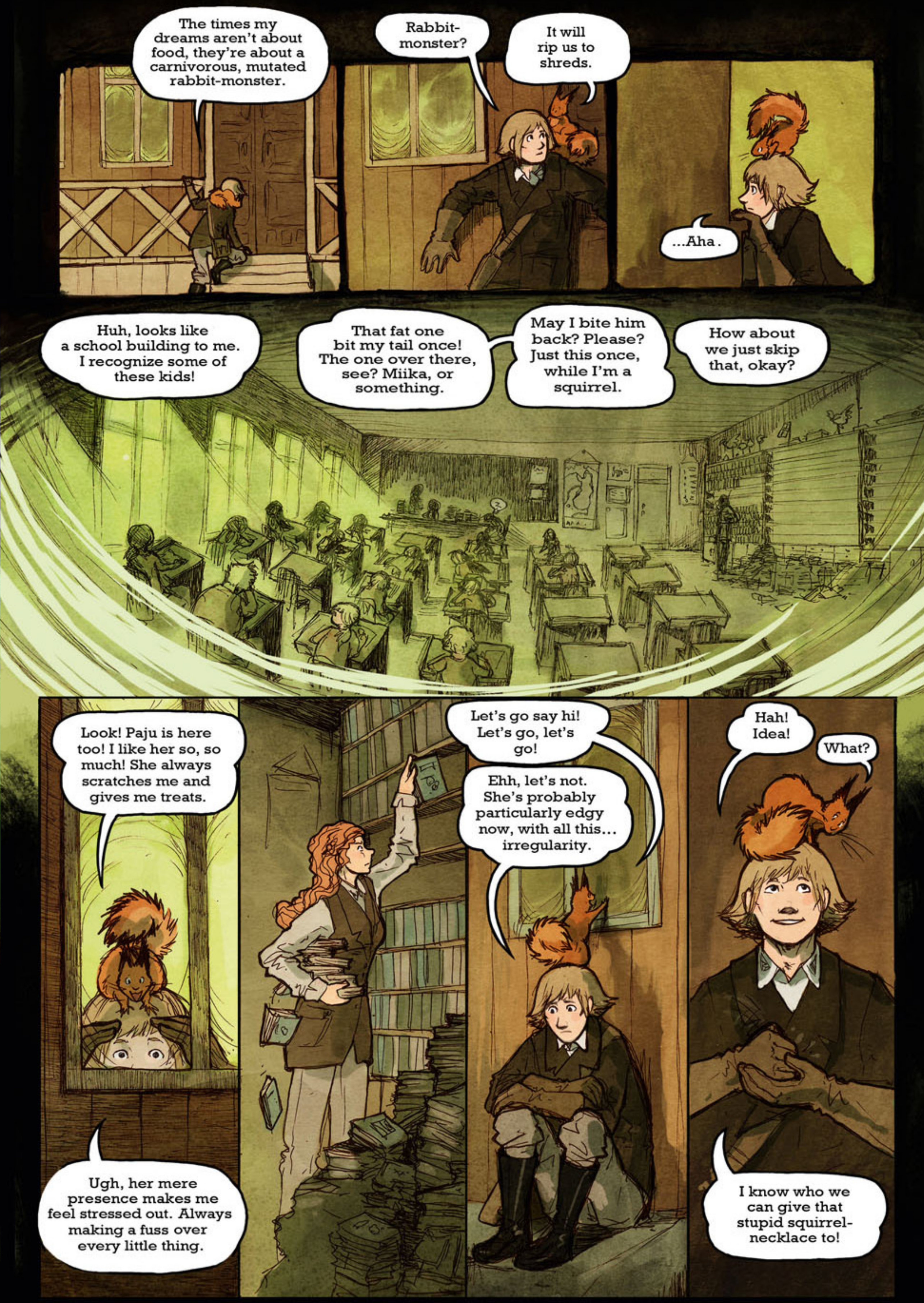
A Redtail's Dream

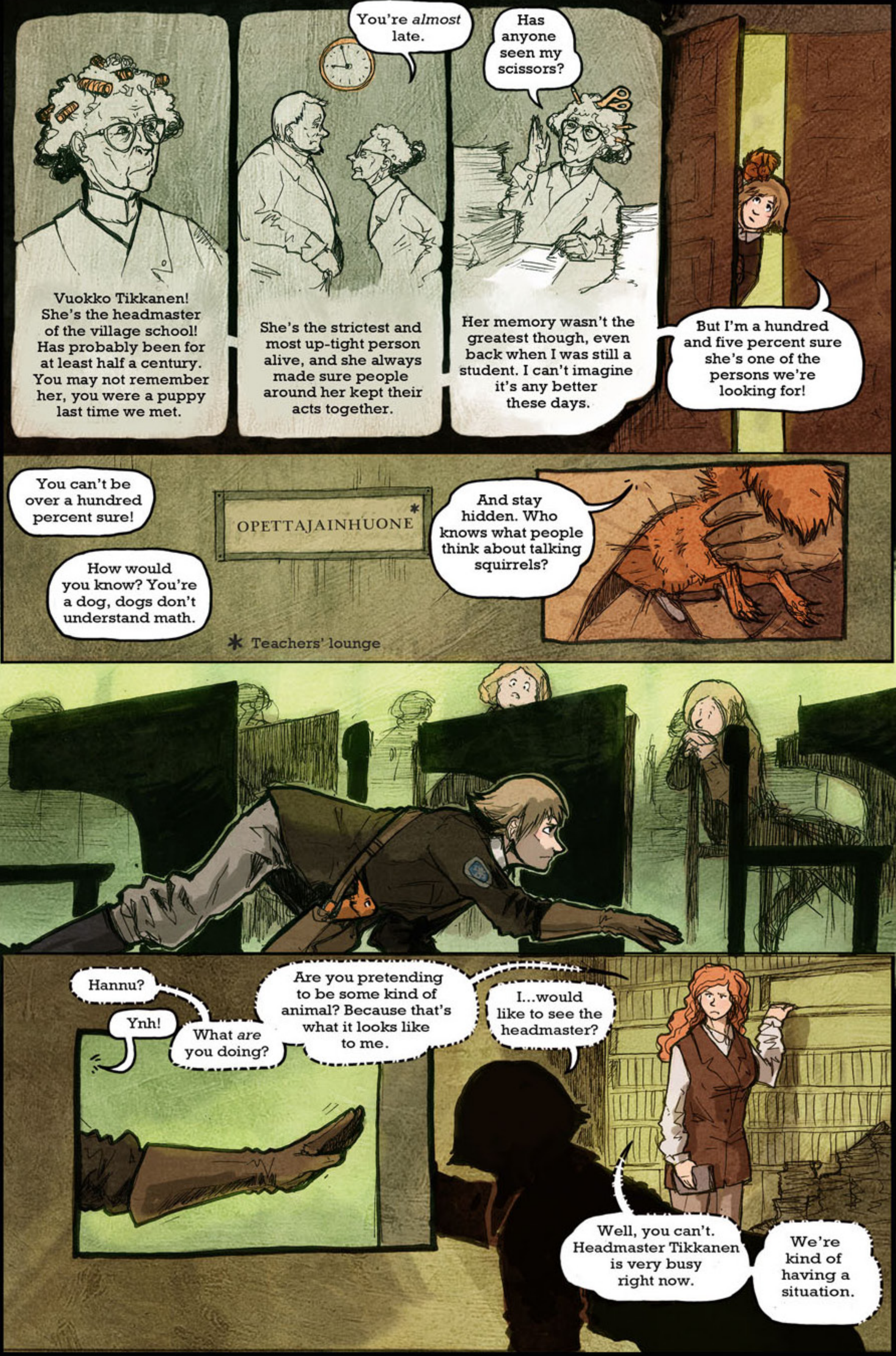
I

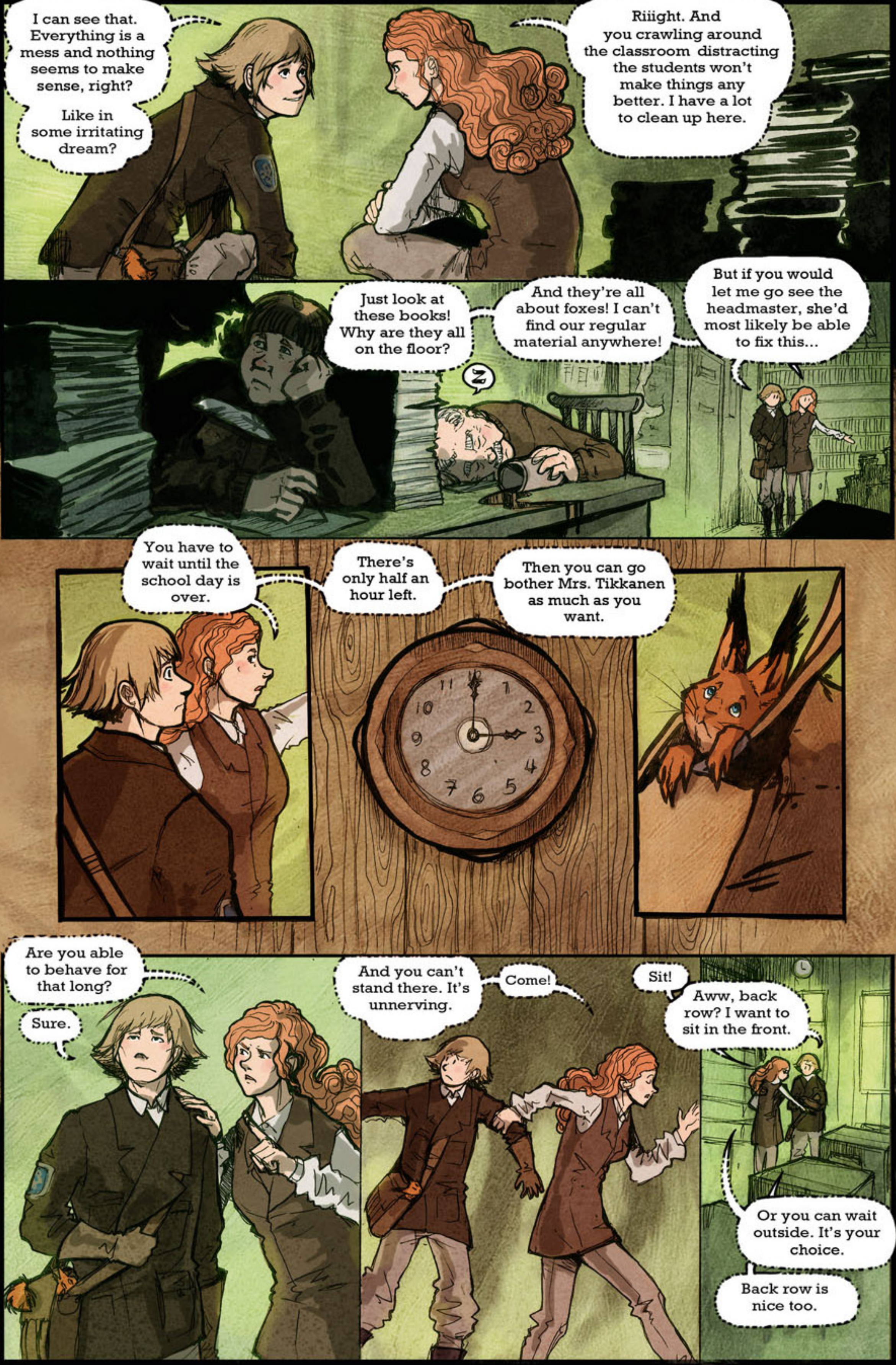

Hello? Are you guys still in one piece?
Eeeh...?
Great, let's get to work! Do you see any people around? Or a small wooden box? I sent you one.
...N-no?
Help!
I'm a squirrel! Nightmare!
Eek! Eek!
Fox! Do something! Ville is a squirrel!
EEEK!!!
Oh, that happens sometimes. Don't worry, his real body is still the same.
An ugly flea bag.
Huh?
How should I know? I don't know you people.
Well, as far as *I* know, our village doesn't have a "head".
Really? I have a handful of those amulets here, there really should be at least a few chiefs around.
Aaanyway, bye for now! Hanging around here is exhausting.
Good luck!

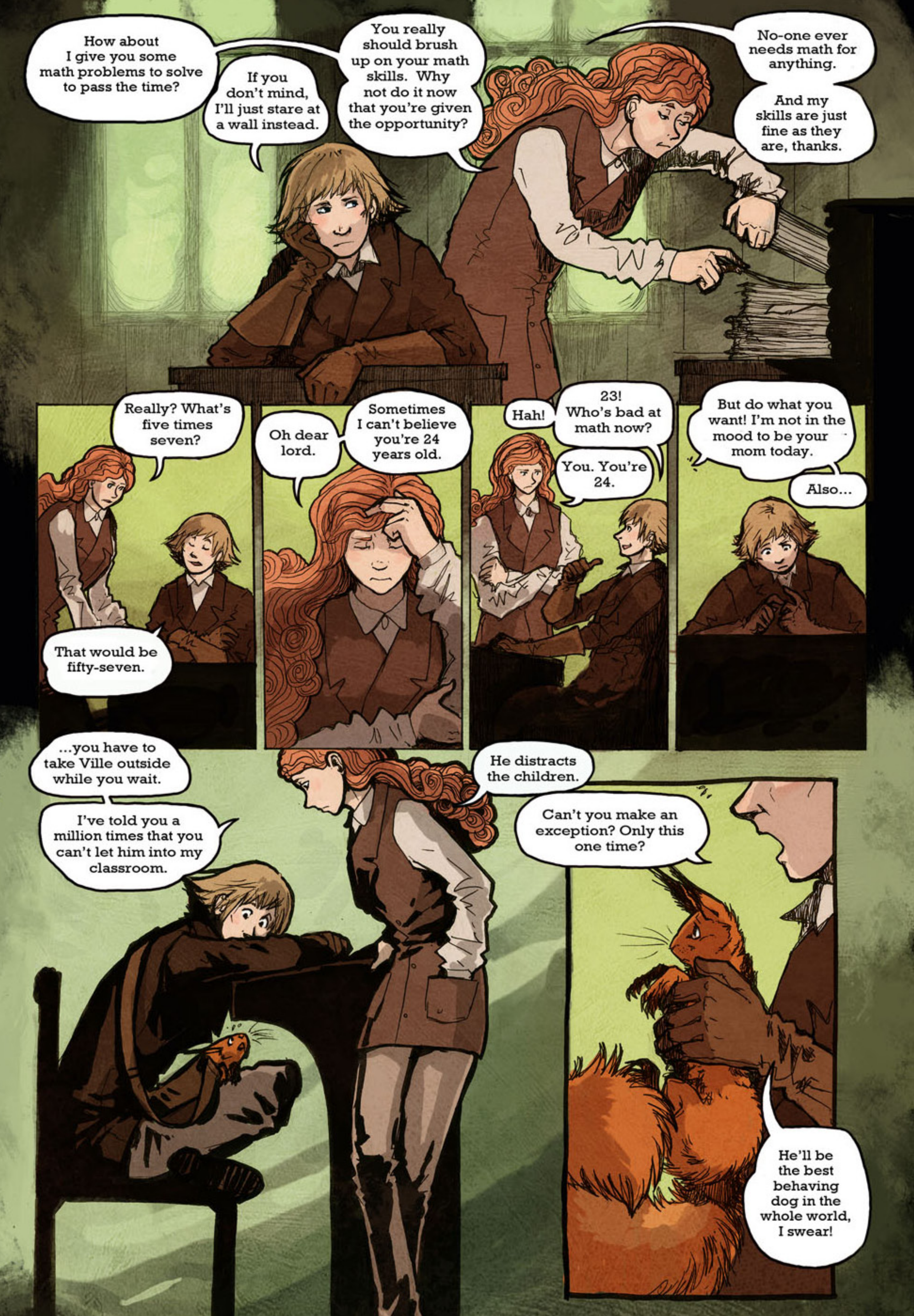

But, so: do you see a box?
No! Something is wrong, isn't it?
We're stuck here forever!
Panic!
TONKS!
Found it. Now what?
Ow.
There's a little amulet that I made inside. It will open a gateway to the Bird's Path.
Give it to the head of your village and the rest will follow them back home.
And who's that, exactly?
That wasn't very helpful.
Maybe there's something in the bag.
A package?
And not for us. Who is Vuokko Tikkanen?
JOKU
REPOPOS
VUOKKO TIKKANEN
12343 MISSÄLIENEE
JOKUMAA
Hmm, sounds familiar, probably someone I should remember.

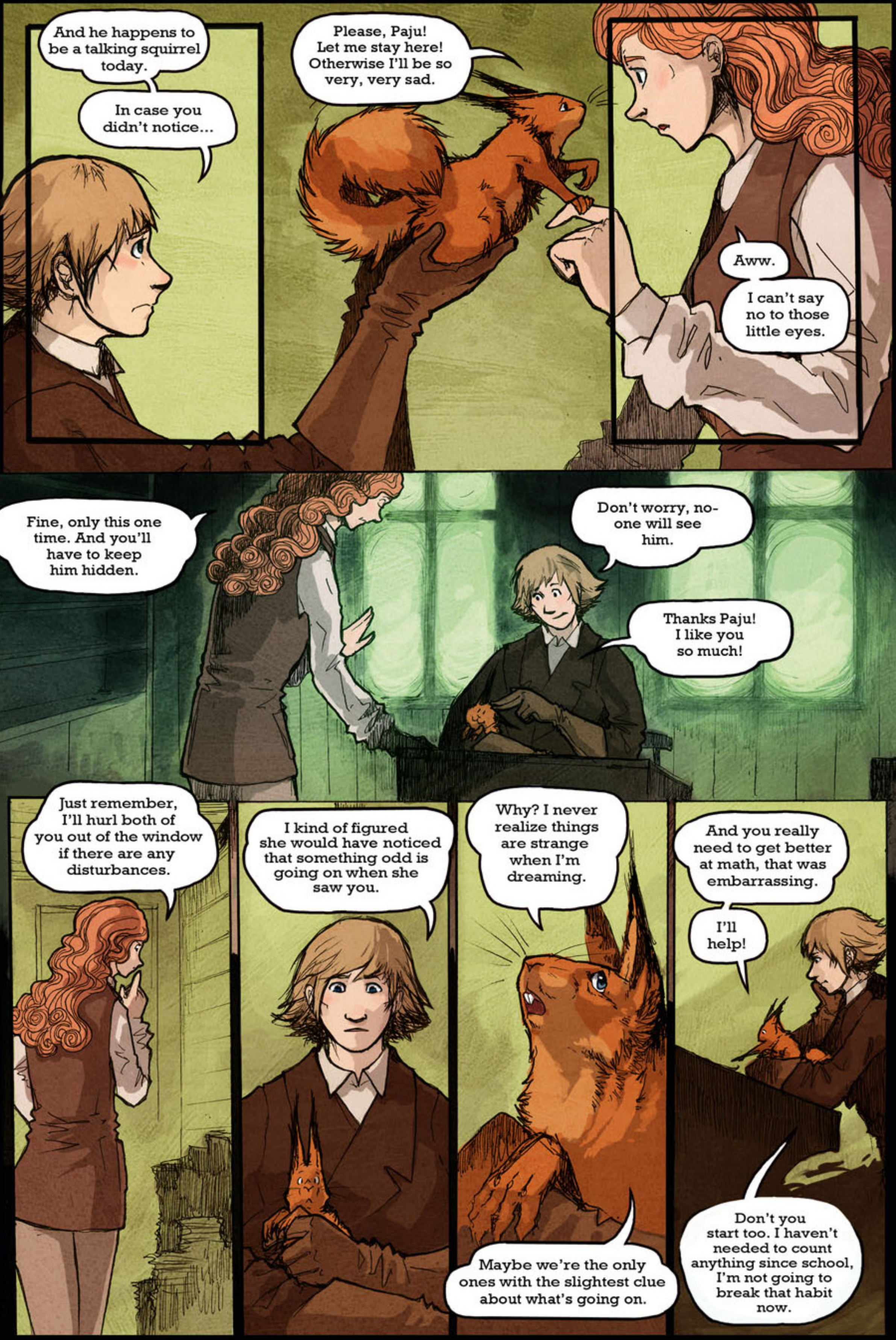

?
!!!
RiiiTS
What are you doing?
Opening this?
No, you won't!
It's illegal and highly unethical to open someone else's mail!
For the love of- fine! I won't open it!
Don't lose your fur...
Good!
Hrmph!
I guess we should try to find some people now.
Master tracker at work!
Building!
Should we knock, or...?
Let's peer in through the window. Just to be safe.

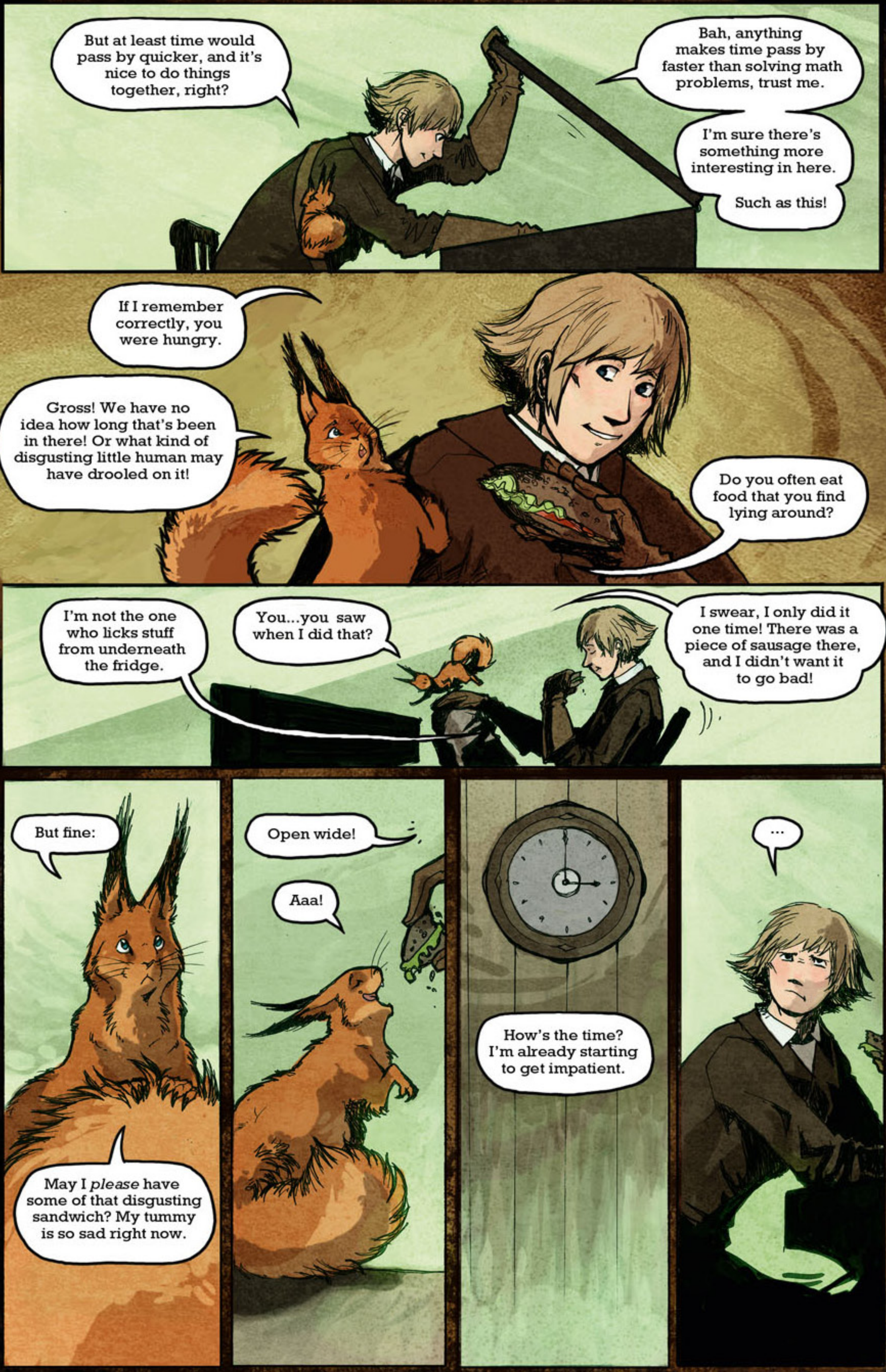

The times my dreams aren't about food, they're about a carnivorous, mutated rabbit-monster.
Rabbit-monster?
It will rip us to shreds.
...Aha.
Huh, looks like a school building to me. I recognize some of these kids!
That fat one bit my tail once! The one over there, see? Miika, or something.
May I bite him back? Please? Just this once, while I'm a squirrel.
How about we just skip that, okay?
Look! Paju is here too! I like her so, so much! She always scratches me and gives me treats.
Ugh, her mere presence makes me feel stressed out. Always making a fuss over every little thing.
Let's go say hi! Let's go, let's go!
Ehh, let's not. She's probably particularly edgy now, with all this... irregularity.
Hah! Idea!
What?
I know who we can give that stupid squirrel-necklace to!

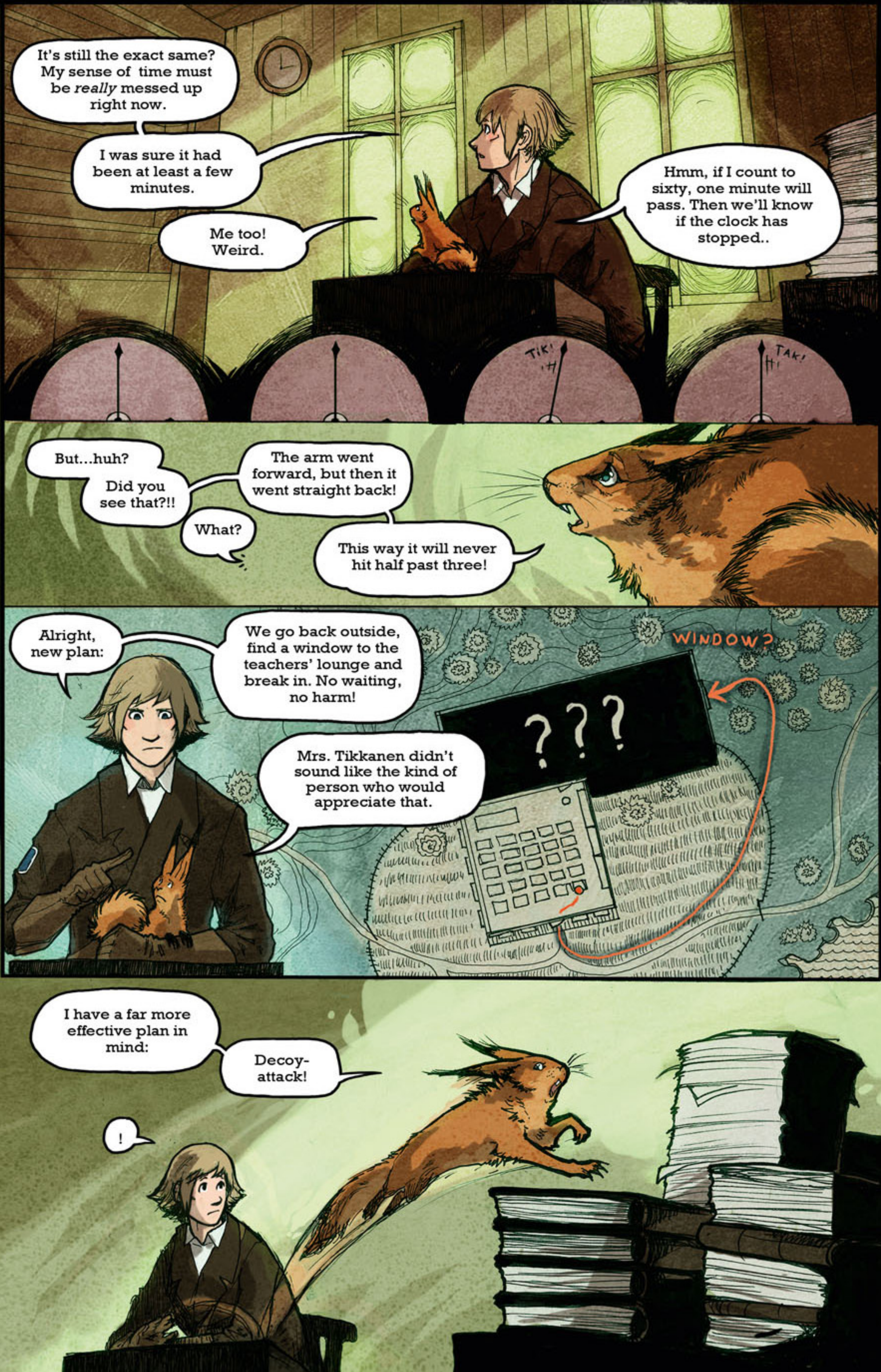

Vuokko Tikkanen! She's the headmaster of the village school! Has probably been for at least half a century. You may not remember her, you were a puppy last time we met.
You're *almost* late.
She's the strictest and most up-tight person alive, and she always made sure people around her kept their acts together.
Has anyone seen my scissors?
Her memory wasn't the greatest though, even back when I was still a student. I can't imagine it's any better these days.
But I'm a hundred and five percent sure she's one of the persons we're looking for!
You can't be over a hundred percent sure!
How would you know? You're a dog, dogs don't understand math.
OPETTAJAINHUONE*
* Teachers' lounge
And stay hidden. Who knows what people think about talking squirrels?
Hannu?
Ynh!
What *are* you doing?
Are you pretending to be some kind of animal? Because that's what it looks like to me.
I...would like to see the headmaster?
Well, you can't. Headmaster Tikkanen is very busy right now.
We're kind of having a situation.

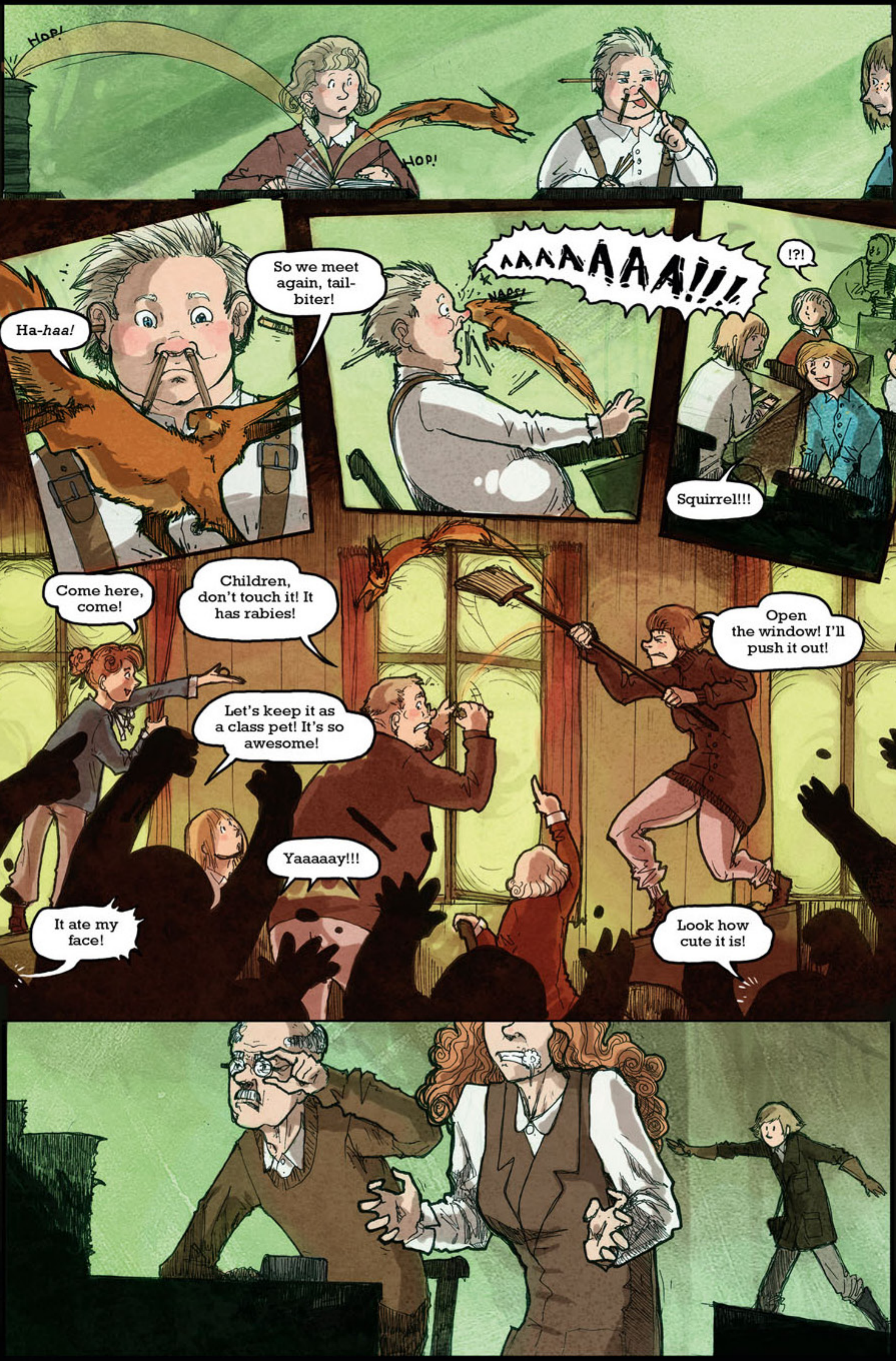

I can see that. Everything is a mess and nothing seems to make sense, right?
Like in some irritating dream?
Riiight. And you crawling around the classroom distracting the students won't make things any better. I have a lot to clean up here.
Just look at these books! Why are they all on the floor?
And they're all about foxes! I can't find our regular material anywhere!
But if you would let me go see the headmaster, she'd most likely be able to fix this...
Z
You have to wait until the school day is over.
There's only half an hour left.
Then you can go bother Mrs. Tikkanen as much as you want.
Are you able to behave for that long?
Sure.
And you can't stand there. It's unnerving.
Come!
Sit!
Aww, back row? I want to sit in the front.
Or you can wait outside. It's your choice.
Back row is nice too.

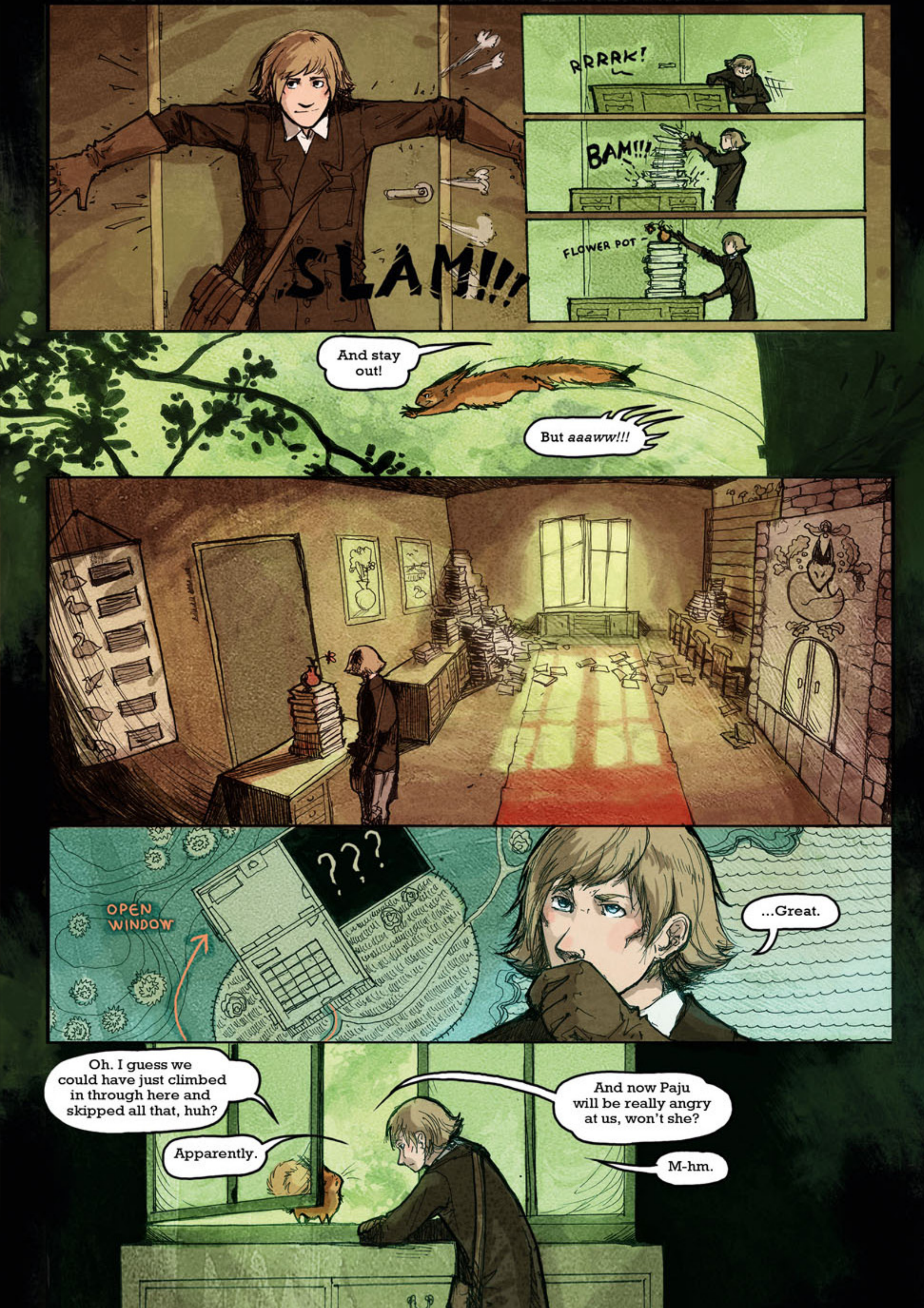

How about I give you some math problems to solve to pass the time?
If you don't mind, I'll just stare at a wall instead.
You really should brush up on your math skills. Why not do it now that you're given the opportunity?
No-one ever needs math for anything.
And my skills are just fine as they are, thanks.
Really? What's five times seven?
That would be fifty-seven.
Oh dear lord.
Sometimes I can't believe you're 24 years old.
Hah!
23! Who's bad at math now?
You. You're 24.
But do what you want! I'm not in the mood to be your mom today.
Also...
...you have to take Ville outside while you wait.
I've told you a million times that you can't let him into my classroom.
He distracts the children.
Can't you make an exception? Only this one time?
He'll be the best behaving dog in the whole world, I swear!

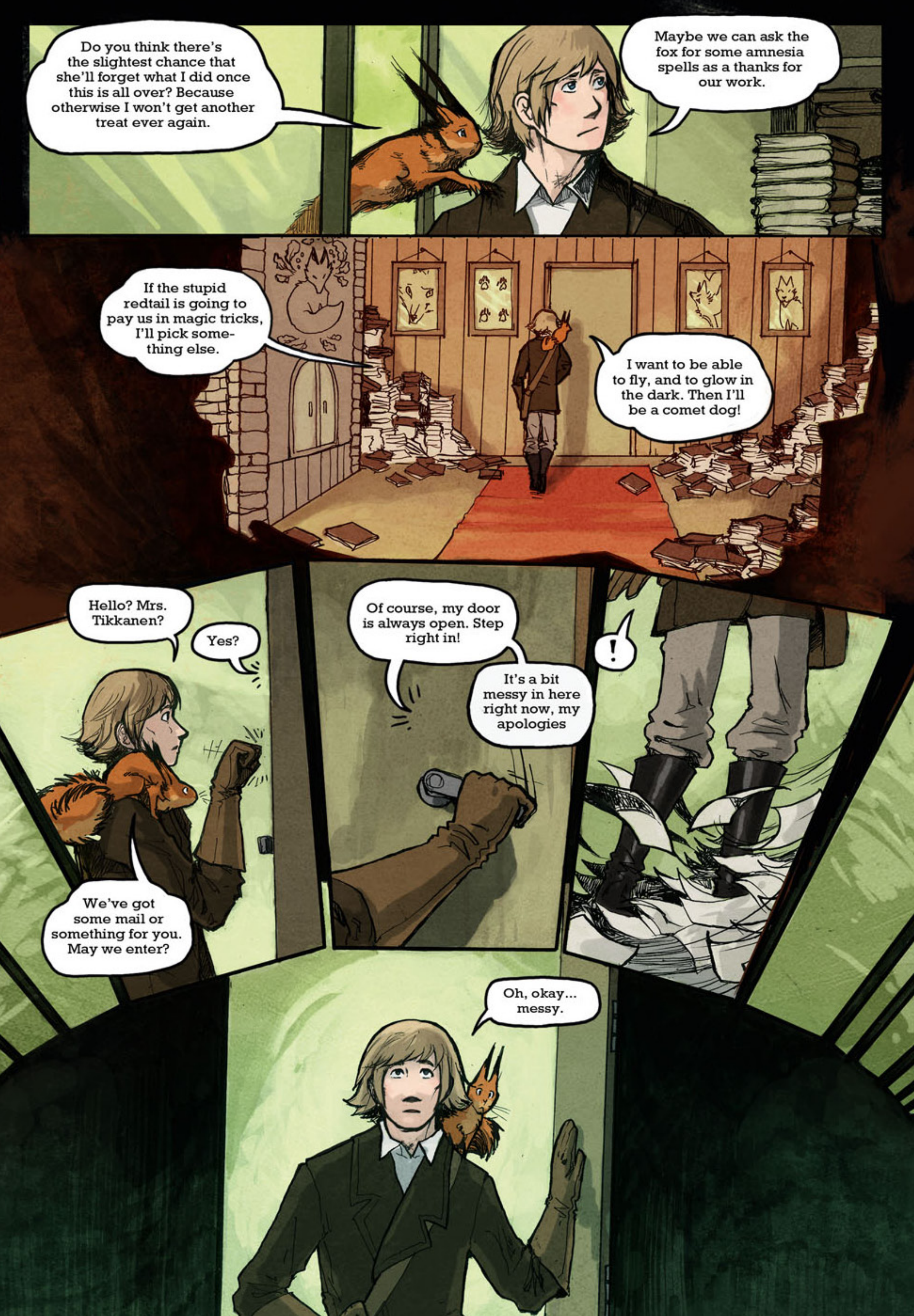

And he happens to be a talking squirrel today.
In case you didn't notice...
Please, Paju! Let me stay here! Otherwise I'll be so very, very sad.
Aww.
I can't say no to those little eyes.
Fine, only this one time. And you'll have to keep him hidden.
Don't worry, no-one will see him.
Thanks Paju! I like you so much!
Just remember, I'll hurl both of you out of the window if there are any disturbances.
I kind of figured she would have noticed that something odd is going on when she saw you.
Why? I never realize things are strange when I'm dreaming.
Maybe we're the only ones with the slightest clue about what's going on.
And you really need to get better at math, that was embarrassing.
I'll help!
Don't you start too. I haven't needed to count anything since school, I'm not going to break that habit now.

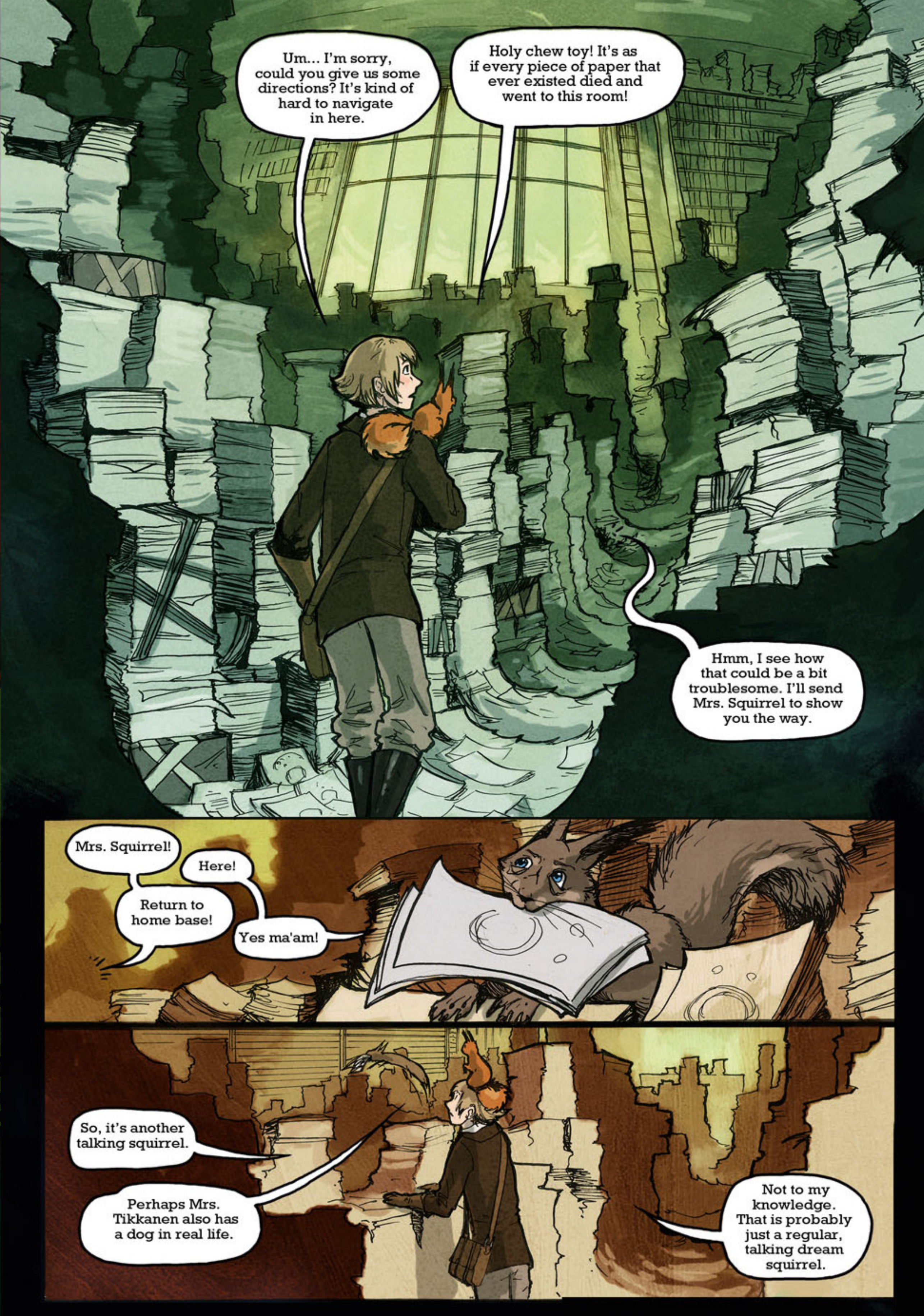

But at least time would pass by quicker, and it's nice to do things together, right?
Bah, anything makes time pass by faster than solving math problems, trust me.
I'm sure there's something more interesting in here.
Such as this!
If I remember correctly, you were hungry.
Gross! We have no idea how long that's been in there! Or what kind of disgusting little human may have drooled on it!
Do you often eat food that you find lying around?
I'm not the one who licks stuff from underneath the fridge.
You...you saw when I did that?
I swear, I only did it one time! There was a piece of sausage there, and I didn't want it to go bad!
But fine:
May I *please* have some of that disgusting sandwich? My tummy is so sad right now.
Open wide!
Aaa!
How's the time? I'm already starting to get impatient.
...

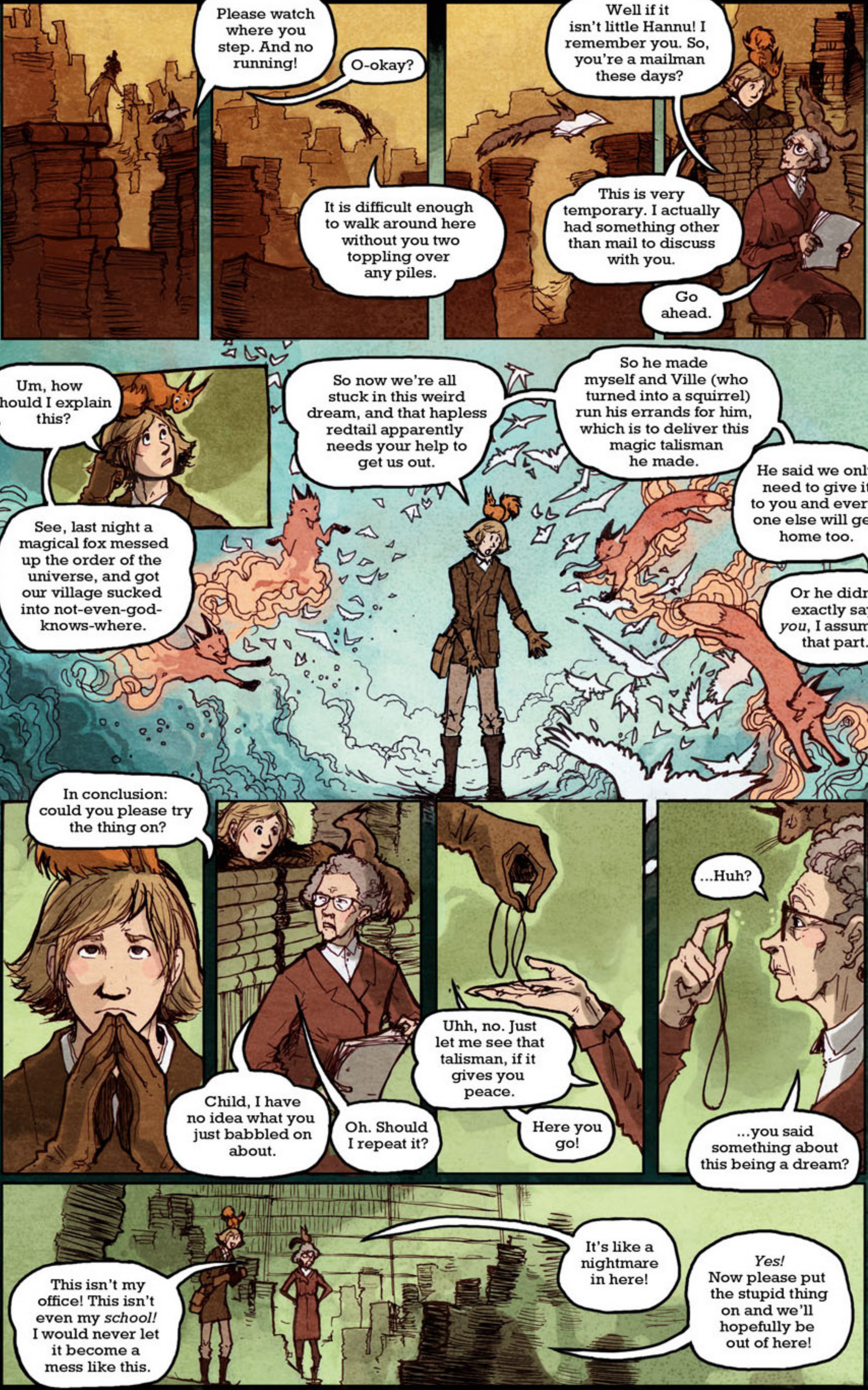

It's still the exact same? My sense of time must be *really* messed up right now.
I was sure it had been at least a few minutes.
Me too! Weird.
Hmm, if I count to sixty, one minute will pass. Then we'll know if the clock has stopped..
TIK!
TAK!
But...huh?
Did you see that?!!
What?
The arm went forward, but then it went straight back!
This way it will never hit half past three!
Alright, new plan:
We go back outside, find a window to the teachers' lounge and break in. No waiting, no harm!
WINDOW?
???
Mrs. Tikkanen didn't sound like the kind of person who would appreciate that.
I have a far more effective plan in mind:
Decoy-attack!
!

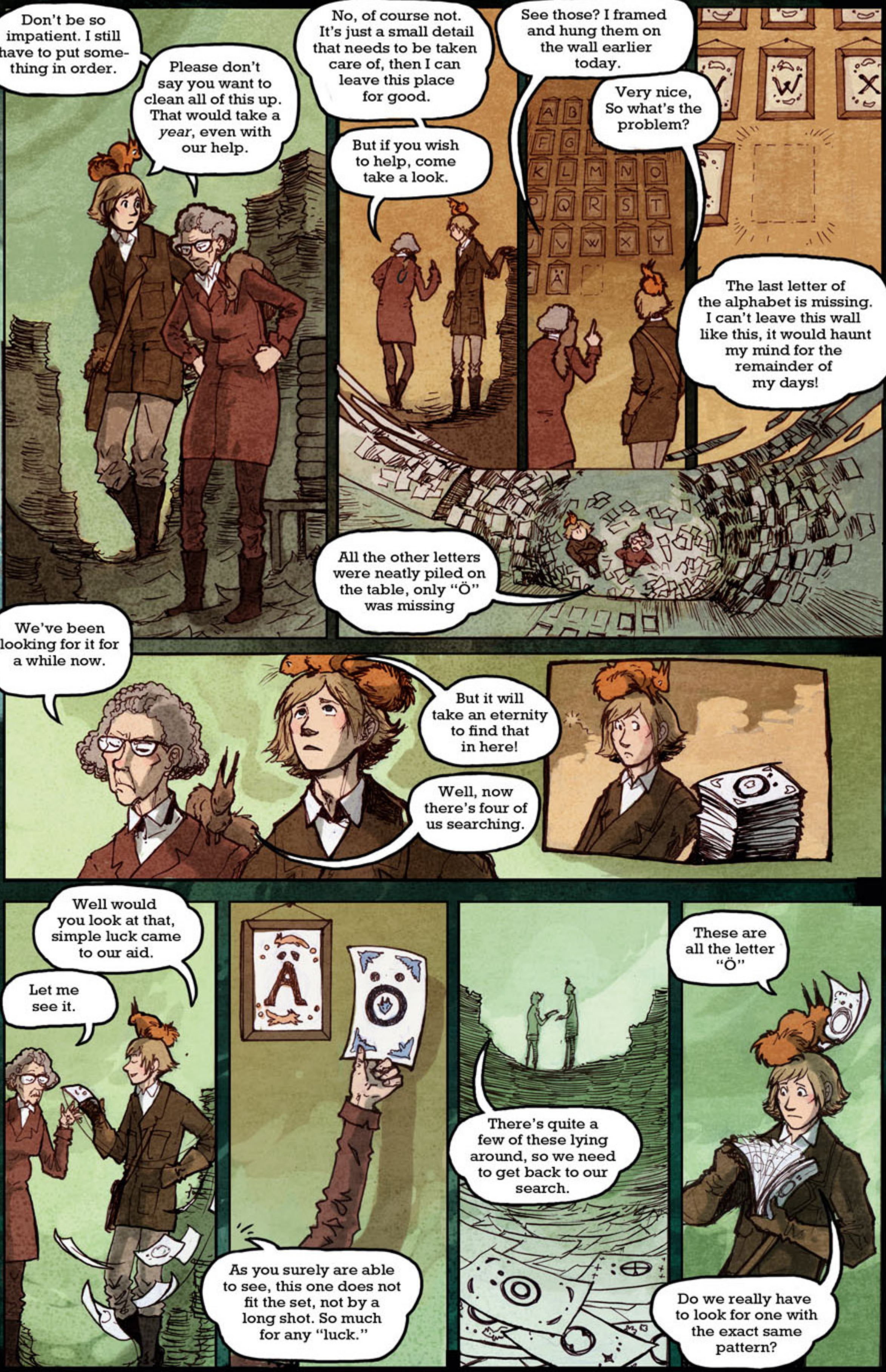

HOP!
HOP!
Ha-*haa!*
So we meet again, tail-biter!
AAAAAAA!!!!
NAPS!
!?!
Squirrel!!!
Come here, come!
Children, don't touch it! It has rabies!
Open the window! I'll push it out!
Let's keep it as a class pet! It's so awesome!
Yaaaaay!!!
It ate my face!
Look how cute it is!

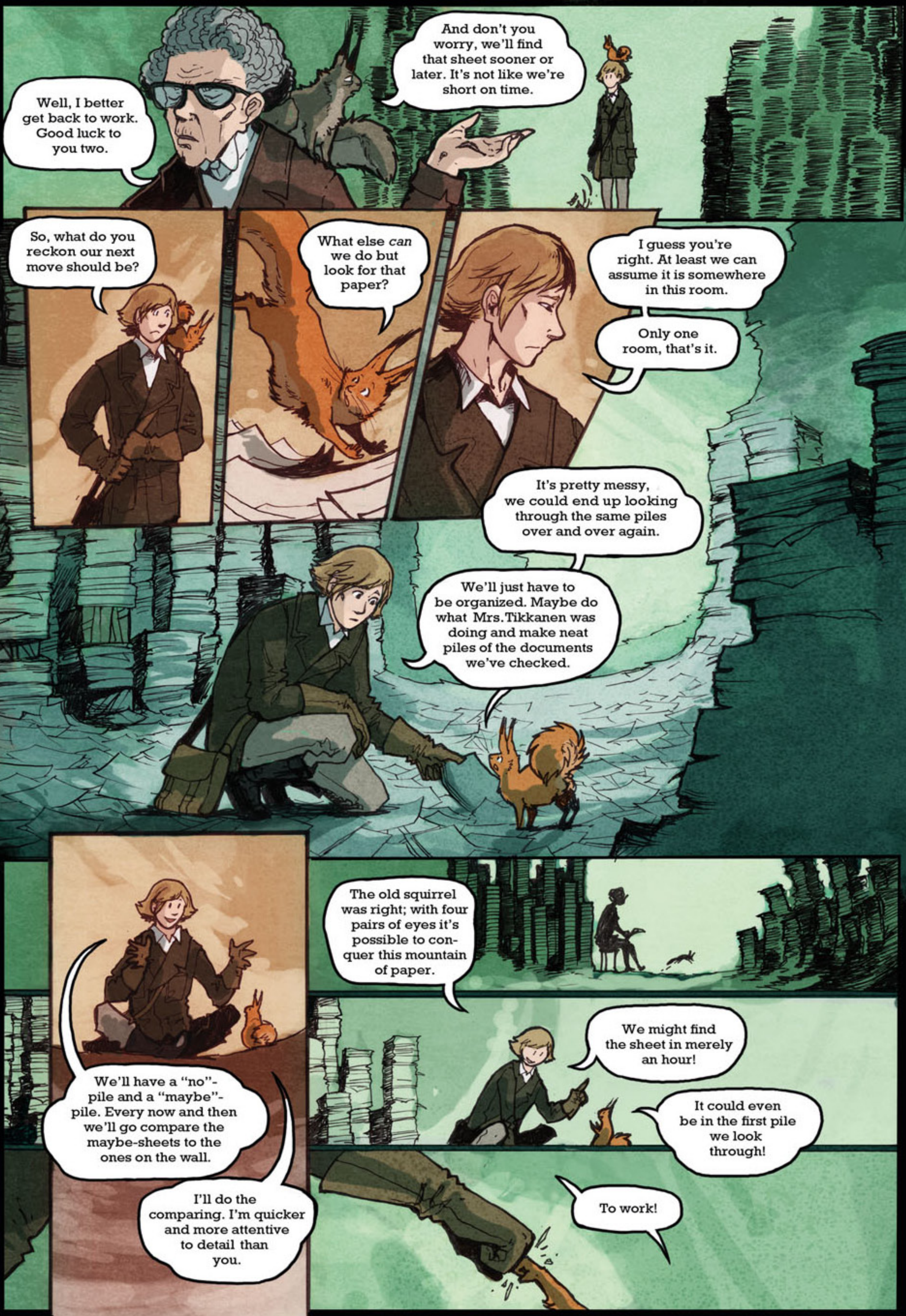

SLAM!!!
RRRRK!
BAM!!!
FLOWER POT
And stay out!
But *aaaww!!!*
OPEN WINDOW
???
...Great.
Oh. I guess we could have just climbed in through here and skipped all that, huh?
And now Paju will be really angry at us, won't she?
Apparently.
M-hm.

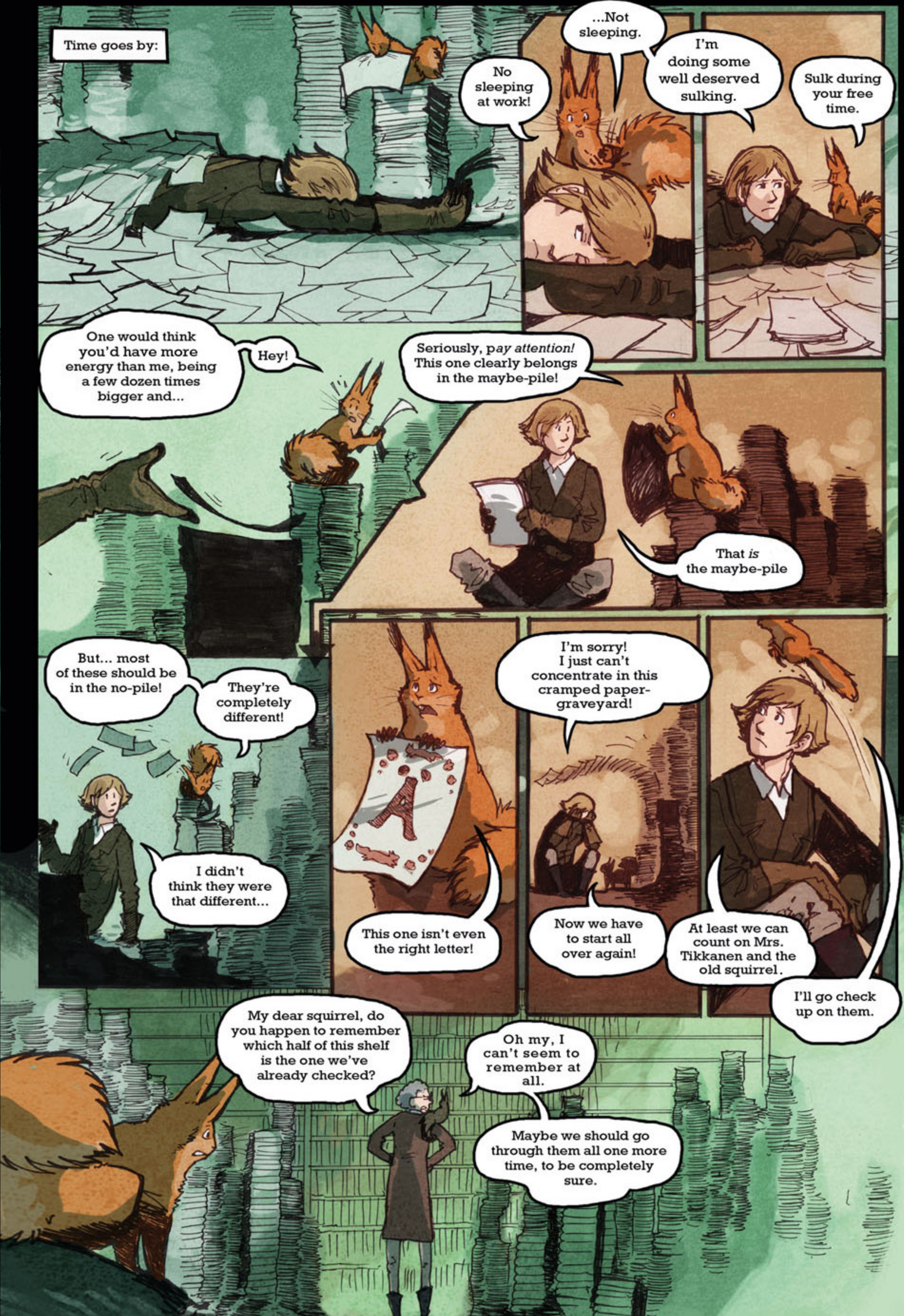

Do you think there's the slightest chance that she'll forget what I did once this is all over? Because otherwise I won't get another treat ever again.
Maybe we can ask the fox for some amnesia spells as a thanks for our work.
If the stupid redtail is going to pay us in magic tricks, I'll pick something else.
I want to be able to fly, and to glow in the dark. Then I'll be a comet dog!
Hello? Mrs. Tikkanen?
Yes?
We've got some mail or something for you. May we enter?
Of course, my door is always open. Step right in!
It's a bit messy in here right now, my apologies
!
Oh, okay... messy.

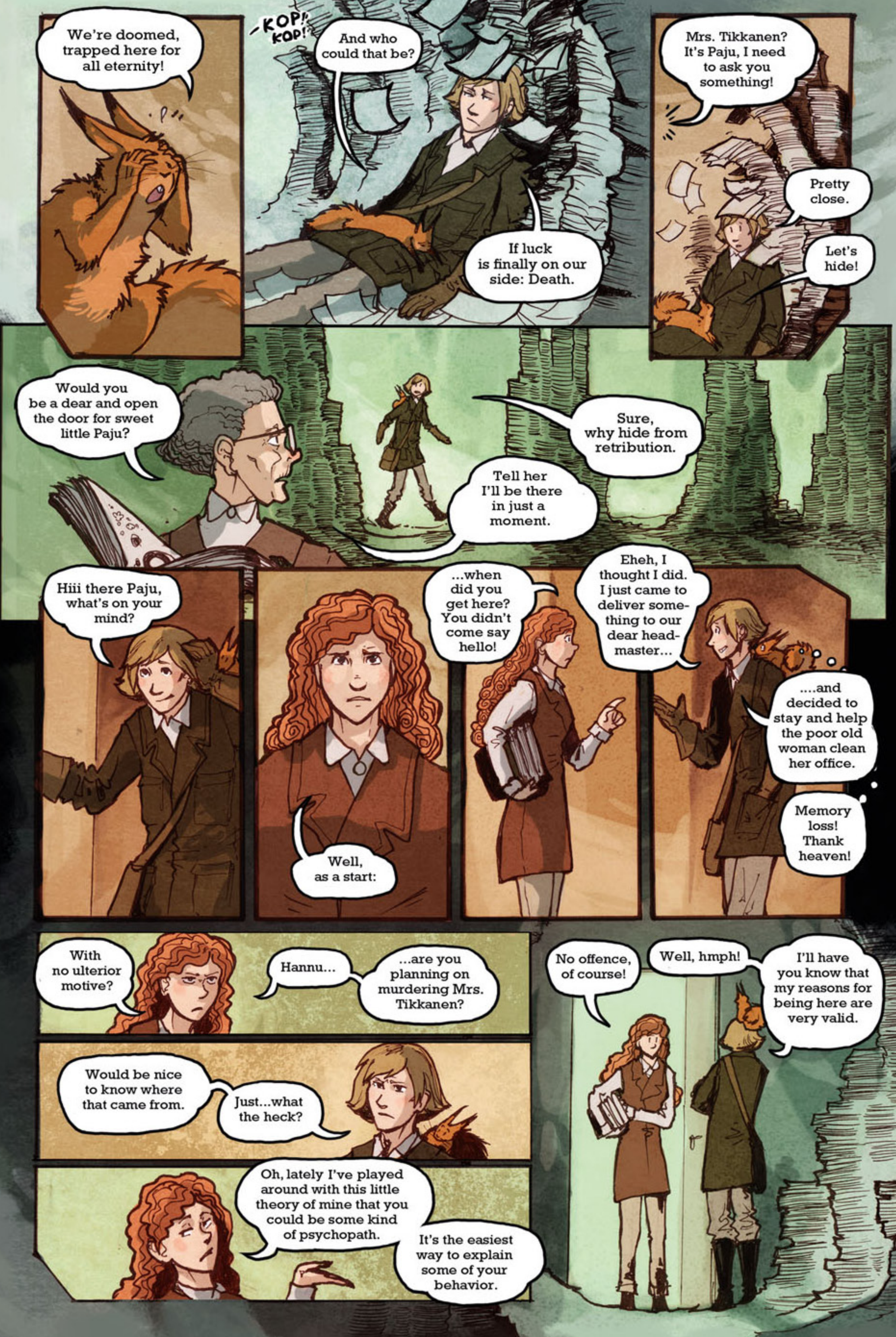

Um... I'm sorry, could you give us some directions? It's kind of hard to navigate in here.
Holy chew toy! It's as if every piece of paper that ever existed died and went to this room!
Hmm, I see how that could be a bit troublesome. I'll send Mrs. Squirrel to show you the way.
Mrs. Squirrel!
Here!
Return to home base!
Yes ma'am!
So, it's another talking squirrel.
Perhaps Mrs. Tikkanen also has a dog in real life.
Not to my knowledge. That is probably just a regular, talking dream squirrel.

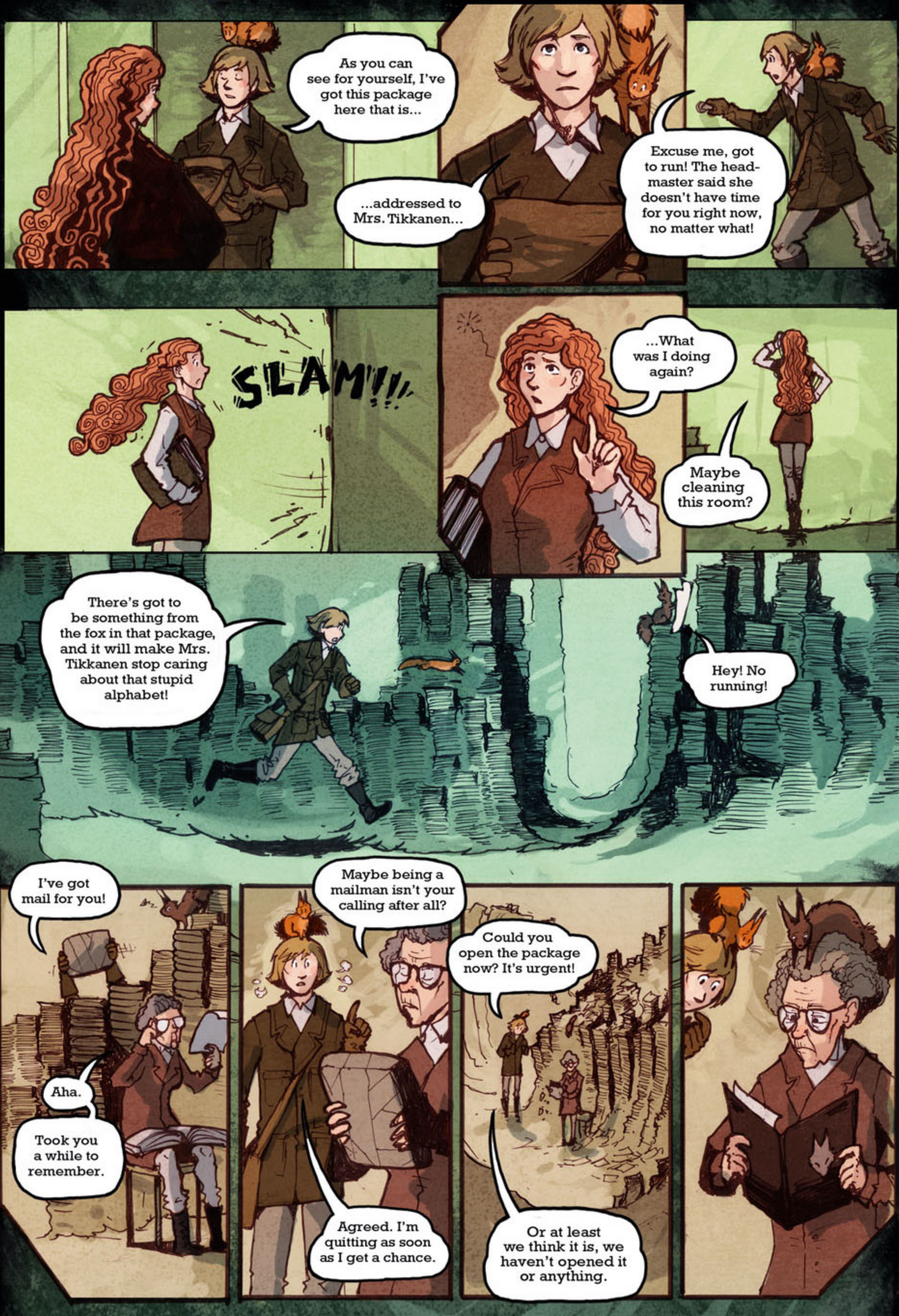

Please watch where you step. And no running!
O-okay?
It is difficult enough to walk around here without you two toppling over any piles.
Well if it isn't little Hannu! I remember you. So, you're a mailman these days?
This is very temporary. I actually had something other than mail to discuss with you.
Go ahead.
Um, how should I explain this?
See, last night a magical fox messed up the order of the universe, and got our village sucked into not-even-god-knows-where.
So now we're all stuck in this weird dream, and that hapless redtail apparently needs your help to get us out.
So he made myself and Ville (who turned into a squirrel) run his errands for him, which is to deliver this magic talisman he made.
He said we only need to give it to you and every-one else will get home too.
Or he didn't exactly say *you*, I assumed that part.
In conclusion: could you please try the thing on?
Child, I have no idea what you just babbled on about.
Oh. Should I repeat it?
Uhh, no. Just let me see that talisman, if it gives you peace.
Here you go!
...Huh?
...you said something about this being a dream?
This isn't my office! This isn't even my *school!* I would never let it become a mess like this.
It's like a nightmare in here!
Yes! Now please put the stupid thing on and we'll hopefully be out of here!

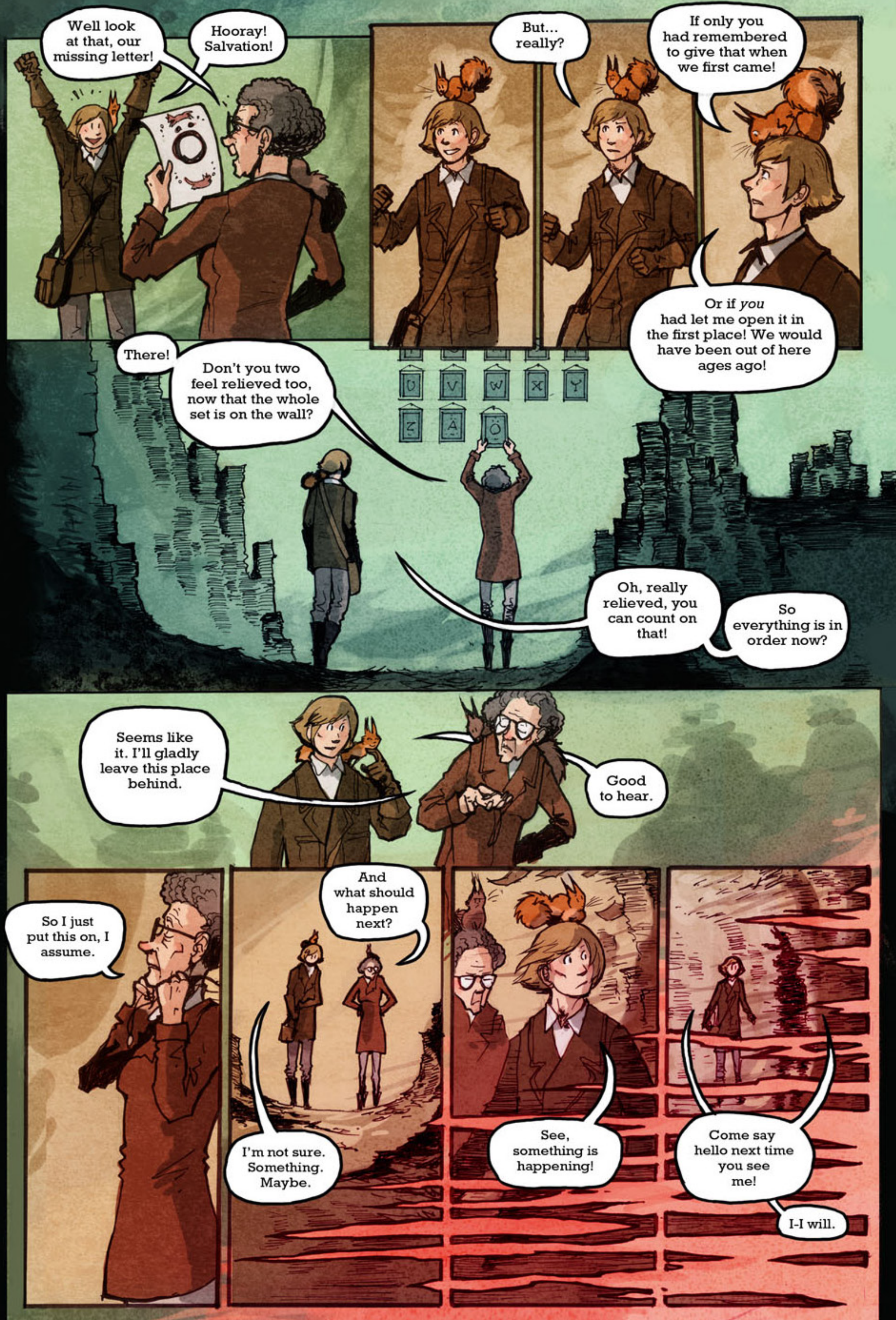

Don't be so impatient. I still have to put something in order.
Please don't say you want to clean all of this up. That would take a *year*, even with our help.
No, of course not. It's just a small detail that needs to be taken care of, then I can leave this place for good.
But if you wish to help, come take a look.
See those? I framed and hung them on the wall earlier today.
Very nice, So what's the problem?
The last letter of the alphabet is missing. I can't leave this wall like this, it would haunt my mind for the remainder of my days!
All the other letters were neatly piled on the table, only "Ö" was missing
We've been looking for it for a while now.
But it will take an eternity to find that in here!
Well, now there's four of us searching.
Well would you look at that, simple luck came to our aid.
Let me see it.
As you surely are able to see, this one does not fit the set, not by a long shot. So much for any "luck."
There's quite a few of these lying around, so we need to get back to our search.
These are all the letter "Ö"
Do we really have to look for one with the exact same pattern?

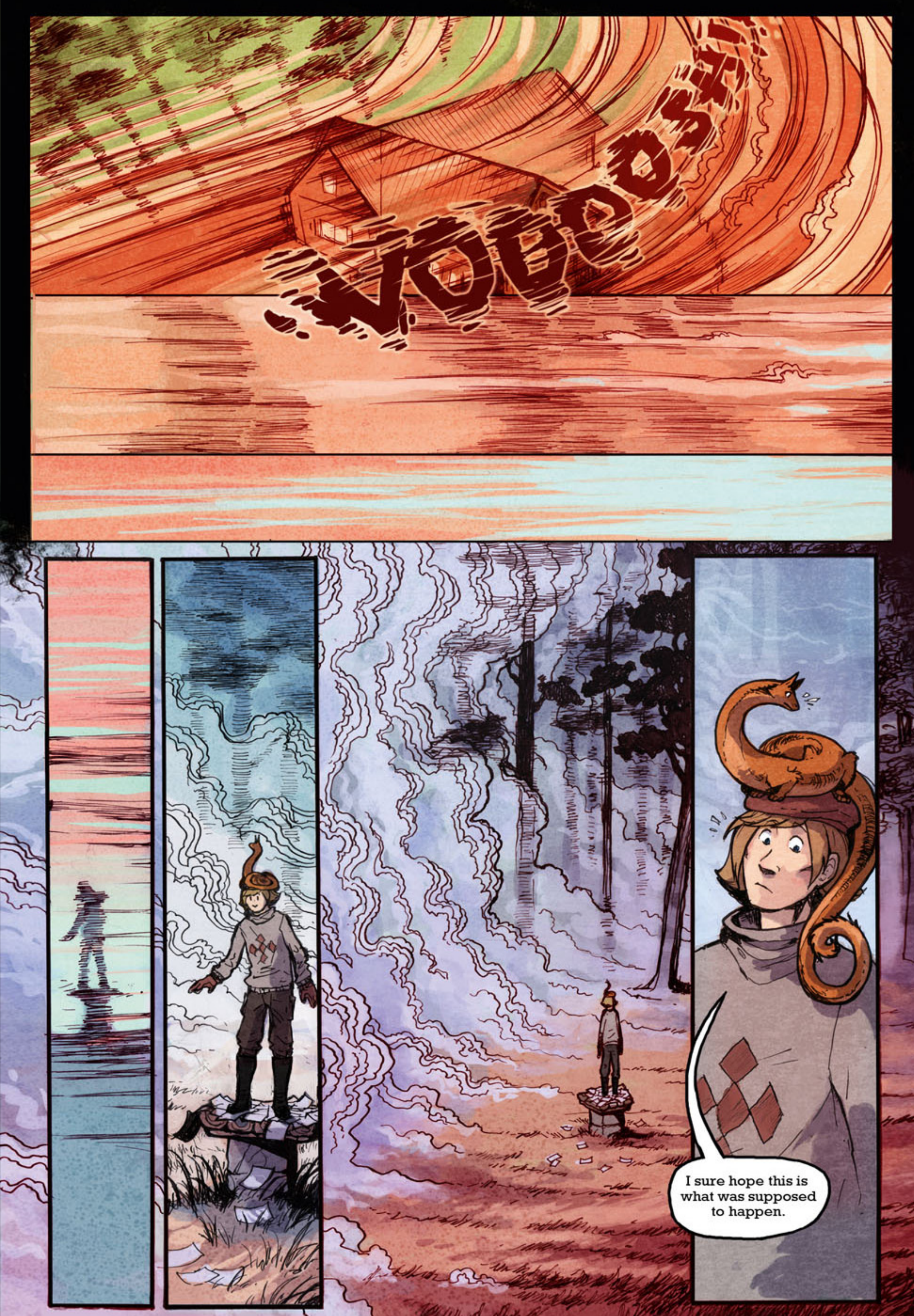

Well, I better get back to work. Good luck to you two.
And don't you worry, we'll find that sheet sooner or later. It's not like we're short on time.
So, what do you reckon our next move should be?
What else *can* we do but look for that paper?
I guess you're right. At least we can assume it is somewhere in this room.
Only one room, that's it.
It's pretty messy, we could end up looking through the same piles over and over again.
We'll just have to be organized. Maybe do what Mrs.Tikkanen was doing and make neat piles of the documents we've checked.
We'll have a "no"-pile and a "maybe"-pile. Every now and then we'll go compare the maybe-sheets to the ones on the wall.
I'll do the comparing. I'm quicker and more attentive to detail than you.
The old squirrel was right; with four pairs of eyes it's possible to conquer this mountain of paper.
We might find the sheet in merely an hour!
It could even be in the first pile we look through!
To work!


Time goes by:
No sleeping at work!
...Not sleeping.
I'm doing some well deserved sulking.
Sulk during your free time.
One would think you'd have more energy than me, being a few dozen times bigger and...
Hey!
Seriously, pay *attention!* This one clearly belongs in the maybe-pile!
That *is* the maybe-pile
But... most of these should be in the no-pile!
They're completely different!
I didn't think they were that different...
This one isn't even the right letter!
I'm sorry! I just can't concentrate in this cramped paper-graveyard!
Now we have to start all over again!
At least we can count on Mrs. Tikkanen and the old squirrel.
I'll go check up on them.
My dear squirrel, do you happen to remember which half of this shelf is the one we've already checked?
Oh my, I can't seem to remember at all.
Maybe we should go through them all one more time, to be completely sure.


We're doomed, trapped here for all eternity!
-KOP! KOP!
And who could that be?
If luck is finally on our side: Death.
Mrs. Tikkanen? It's Paju, I need to ask you something!
Pretty close.
Let's hide!
Would you be a dear and open the door for sweet little Paju?
Sure, why hide from retribution.
Tell her I'll be there in just a moment.
Hiii there Paju, what's on your mind?
Well, as a start:
...when did you get here? You didn't come say hello!
Eheh, I thought I did. I just came to deliver something to our dear headmaster...
....and decided to stay and help the poor old woman clean her office.
Memory loss! Thank heaven!
With no ulterior motive?
Hannu...
...are you planning on murdering Mrs. Tikkanen?
Would be nice to know where that came from.
Just...what the heck?
Oh, lately I've played around with this little theory of mine that you could be some kind of psychopath.
It's the easiest way to explain some of your behavior.
No offence, of course!
Well, hmph!
I'll have you know that my reasons for being here are very valid.

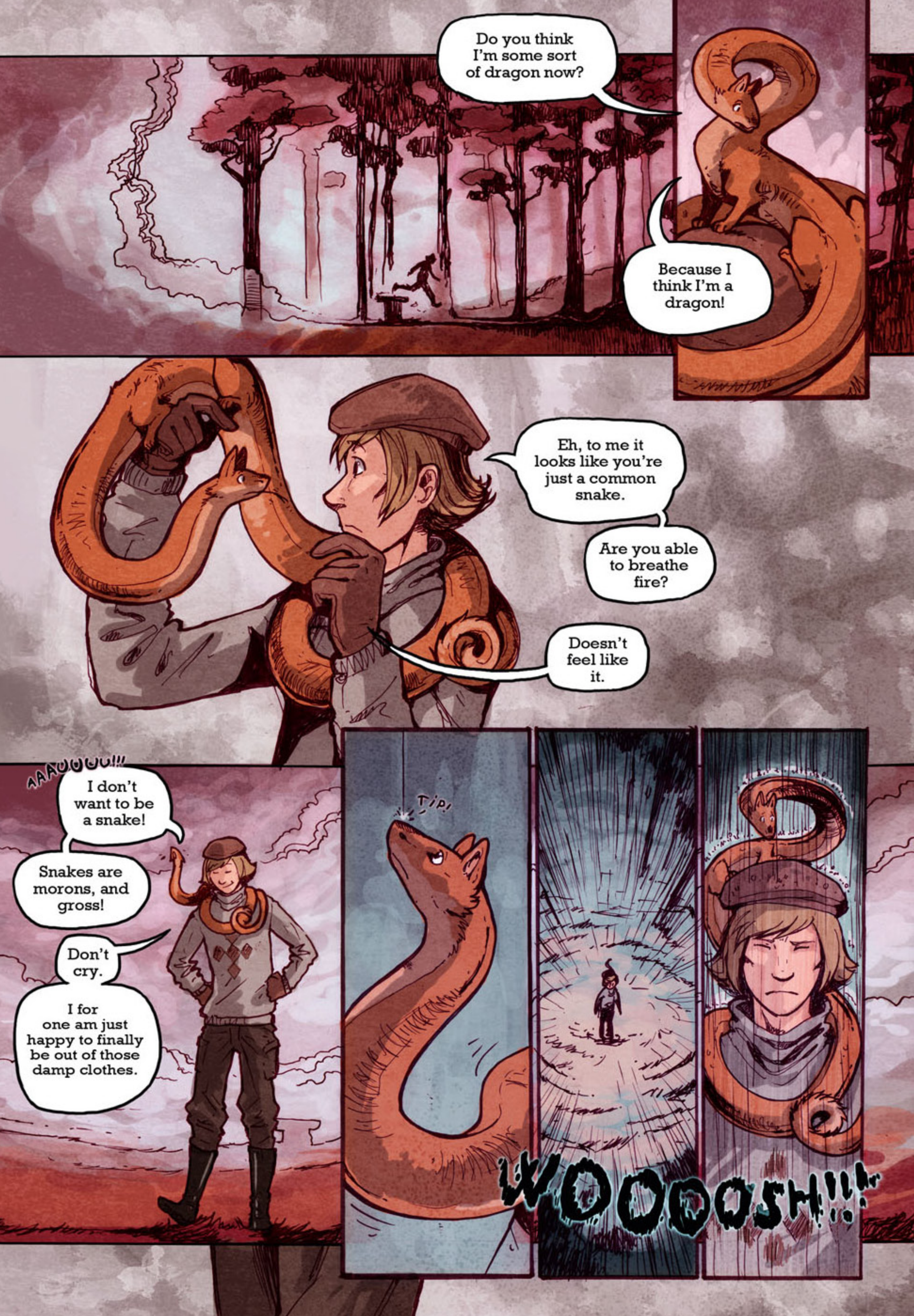

As you can see for yourself, I've got this package here that is...
...addressed to Mrs. Tikkanen...
Excuse me, got to run! The head-master said she doesn't have time for you right now, no matter what!
SLAM!!!
...What was I doing again?
Maybe cleaning this room?
There's got to be something from the fox in that package, and it will make Mrs. Tikkanen stop caring about that stupid alphabet!
Hey! No running!
I've got mail for you!
Aha.
Took you a while to remember.
Maybe being a mailman isn't your calling after all?
Agreed. I'm quitting as soon as I get a chance.
Could you open the package now? It's urgent!
Or at least we think it is, we haven't opened it or anything.

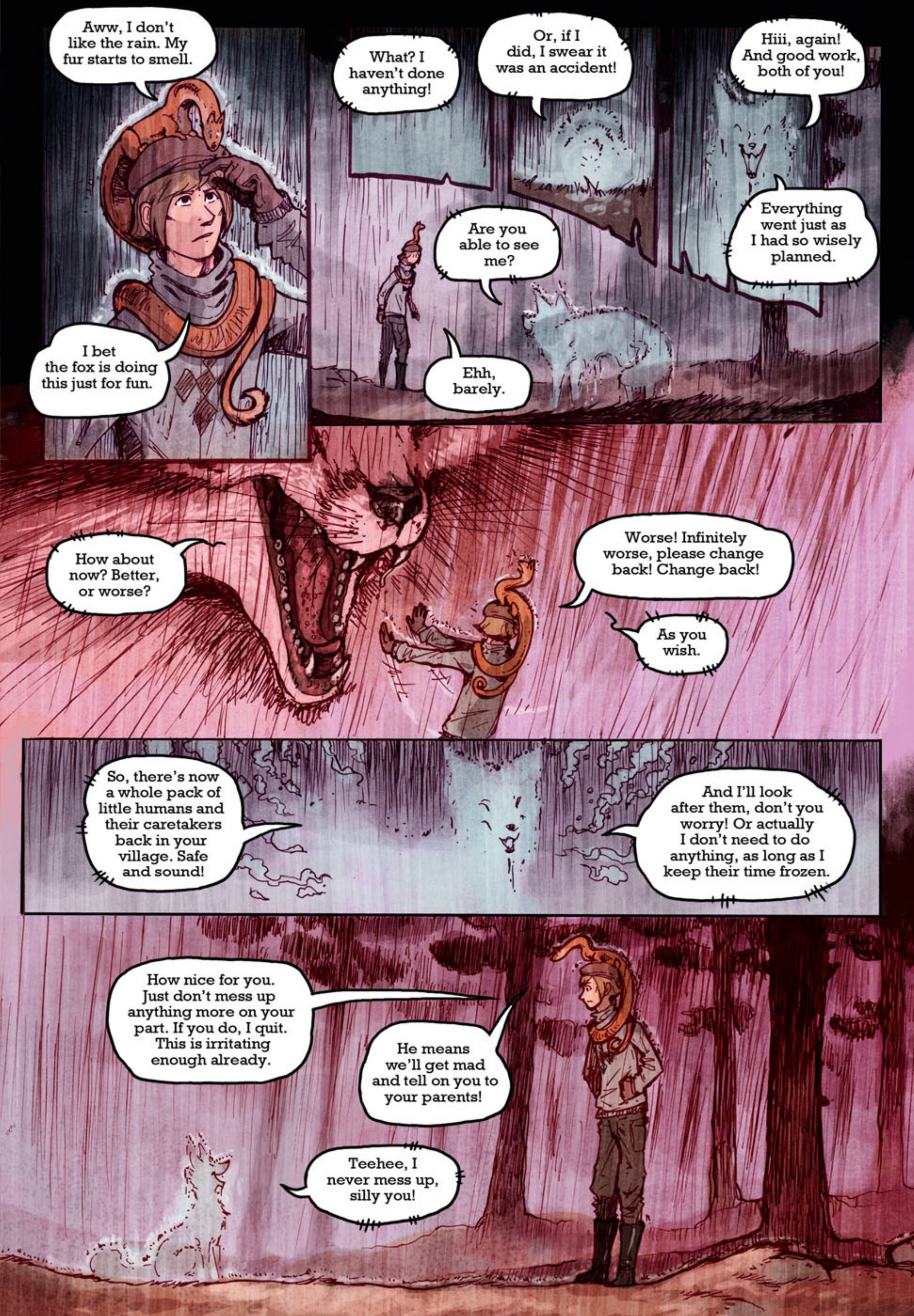

Well look at that, our missing letter!
Hooray! Salvation!
Ö
But… really?
If only you had remembered to give that when we first came!
Or if *you* had let me open it in the first place! We would have been out of here ages ago!
There!
Don't you two feel relieved too, now that the whole set is on the wall?
U V W X Y
Z Ä Ö
Oh, really relieved, you can count on that!
So everything is in order now?
Seems like it. I'll gladly leave this place behind.
Good to hear.
So I just put this on, I assume.
And what should happen next?
I'm not sure. Something. Maybe.
See, something is happening!
Come say hello next time you see me!
I-I will.

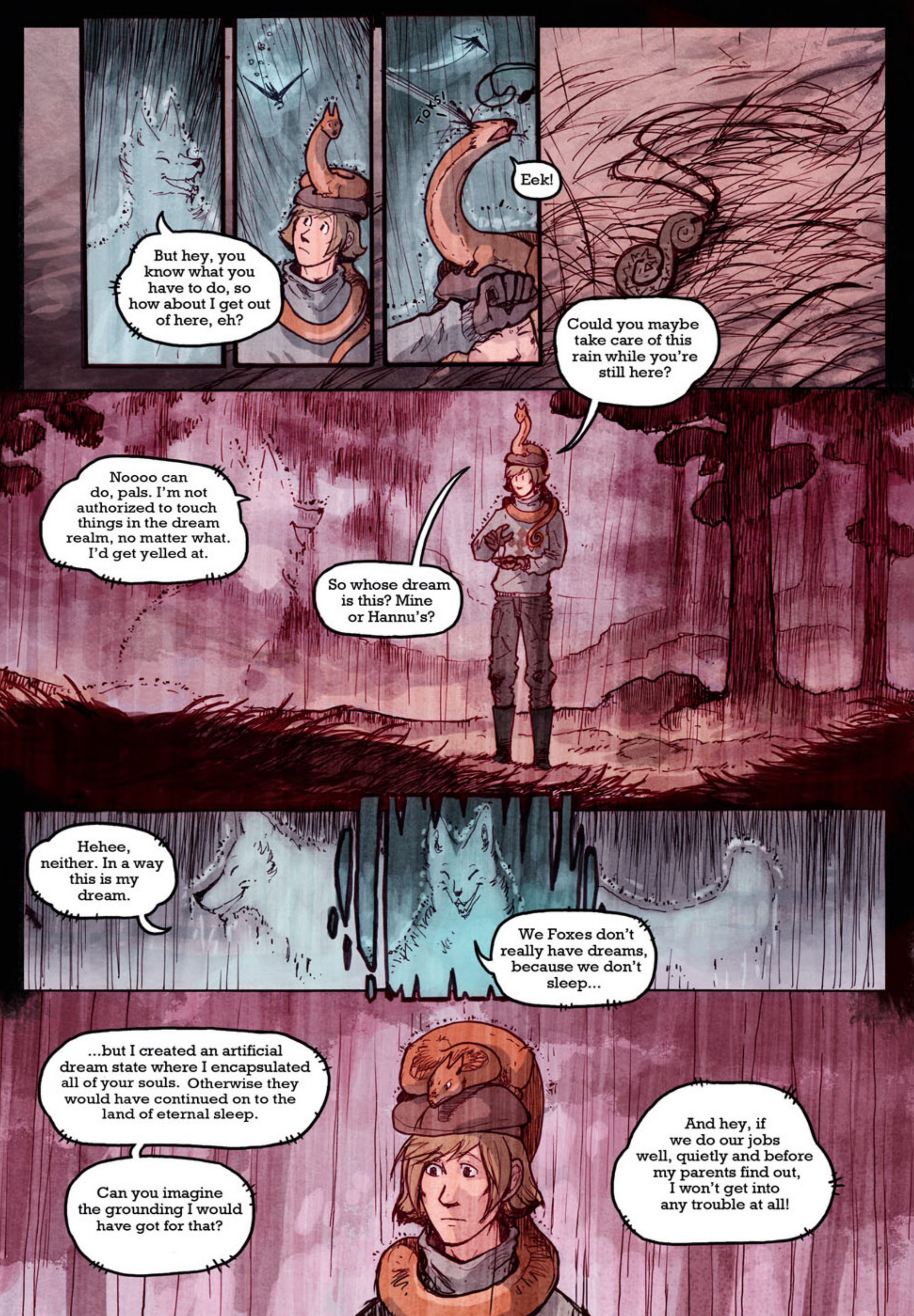

VOOOOSH!
I sure hope this is what was supposed to happen.

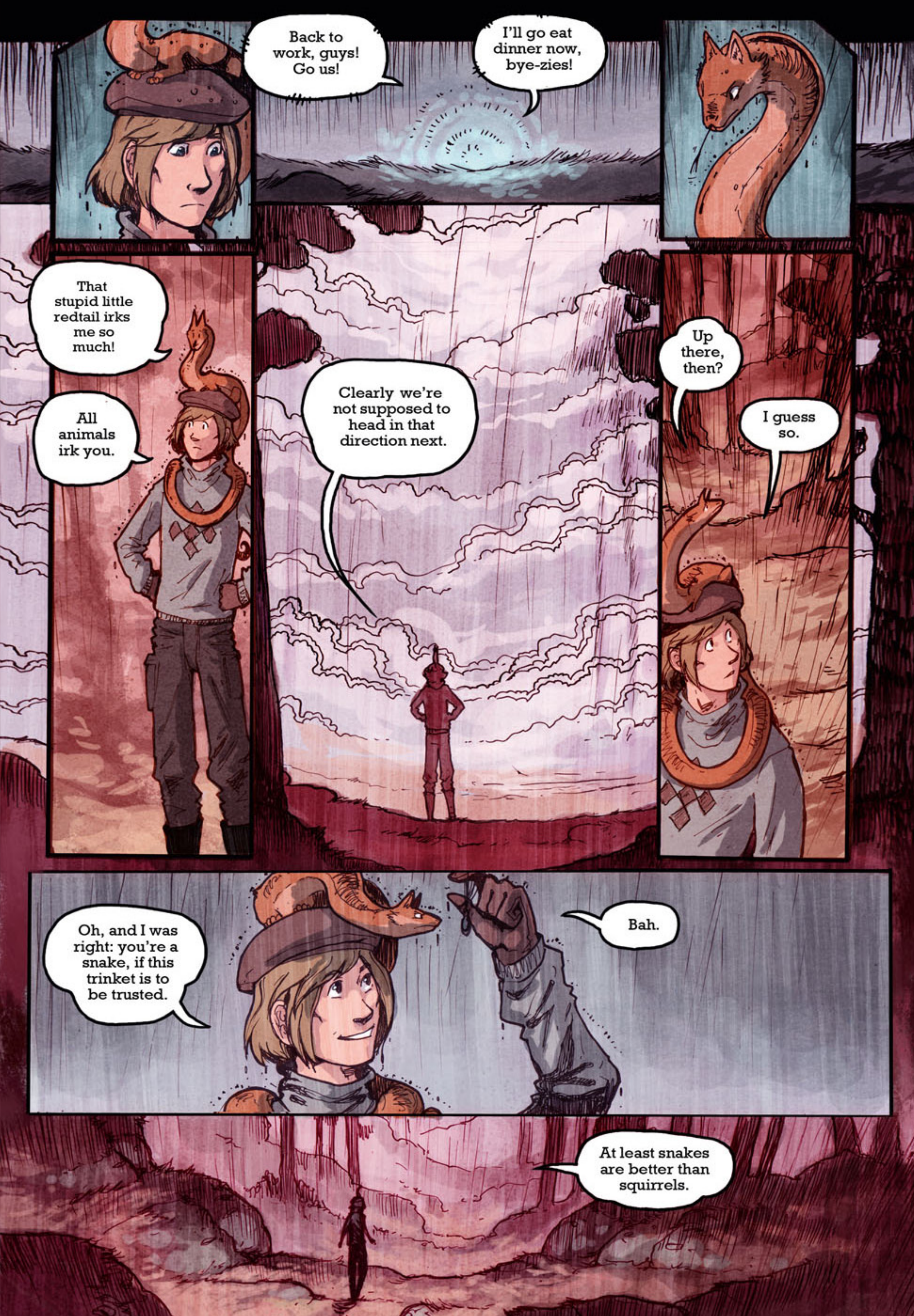
II

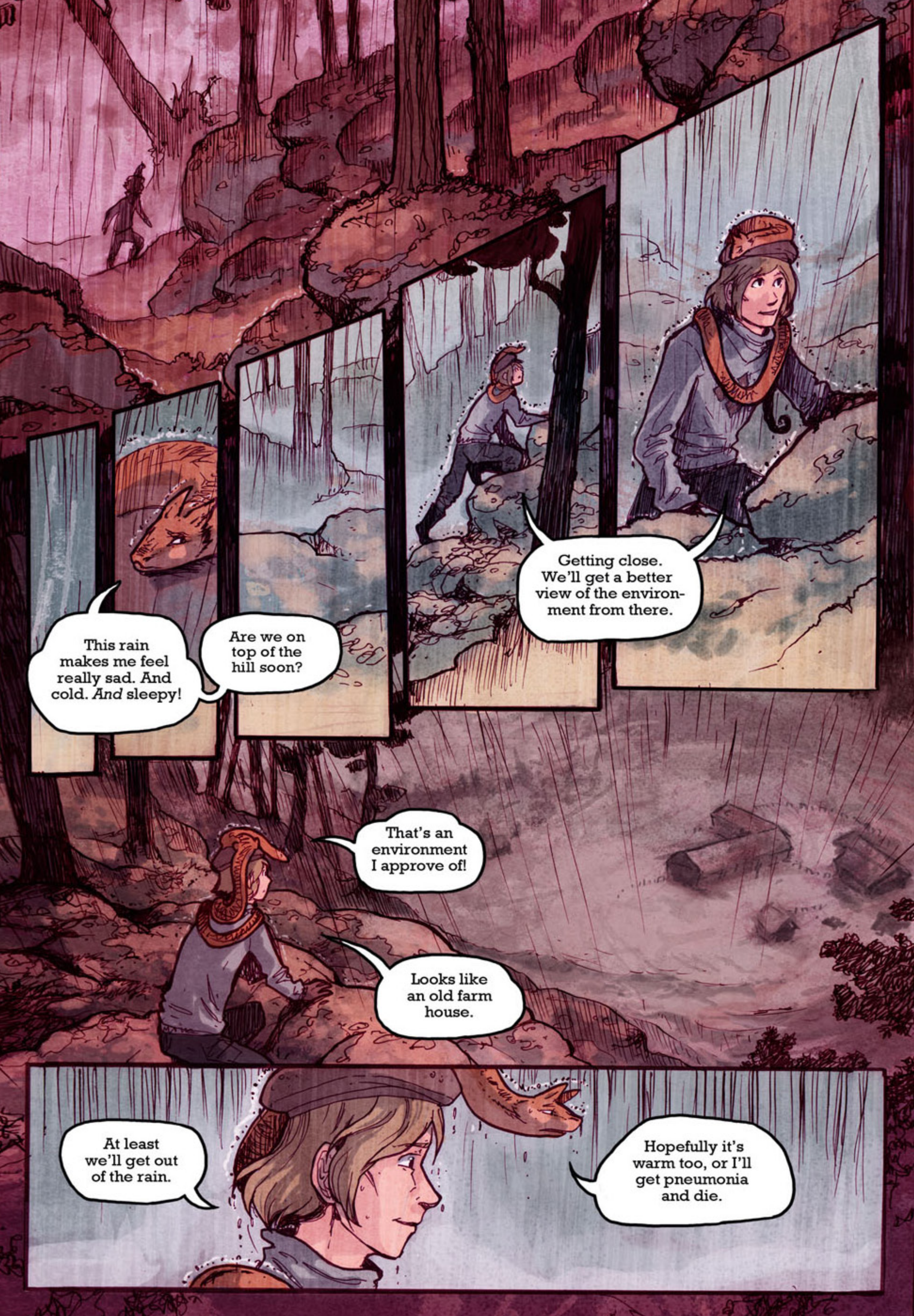
A Redtail's Dream

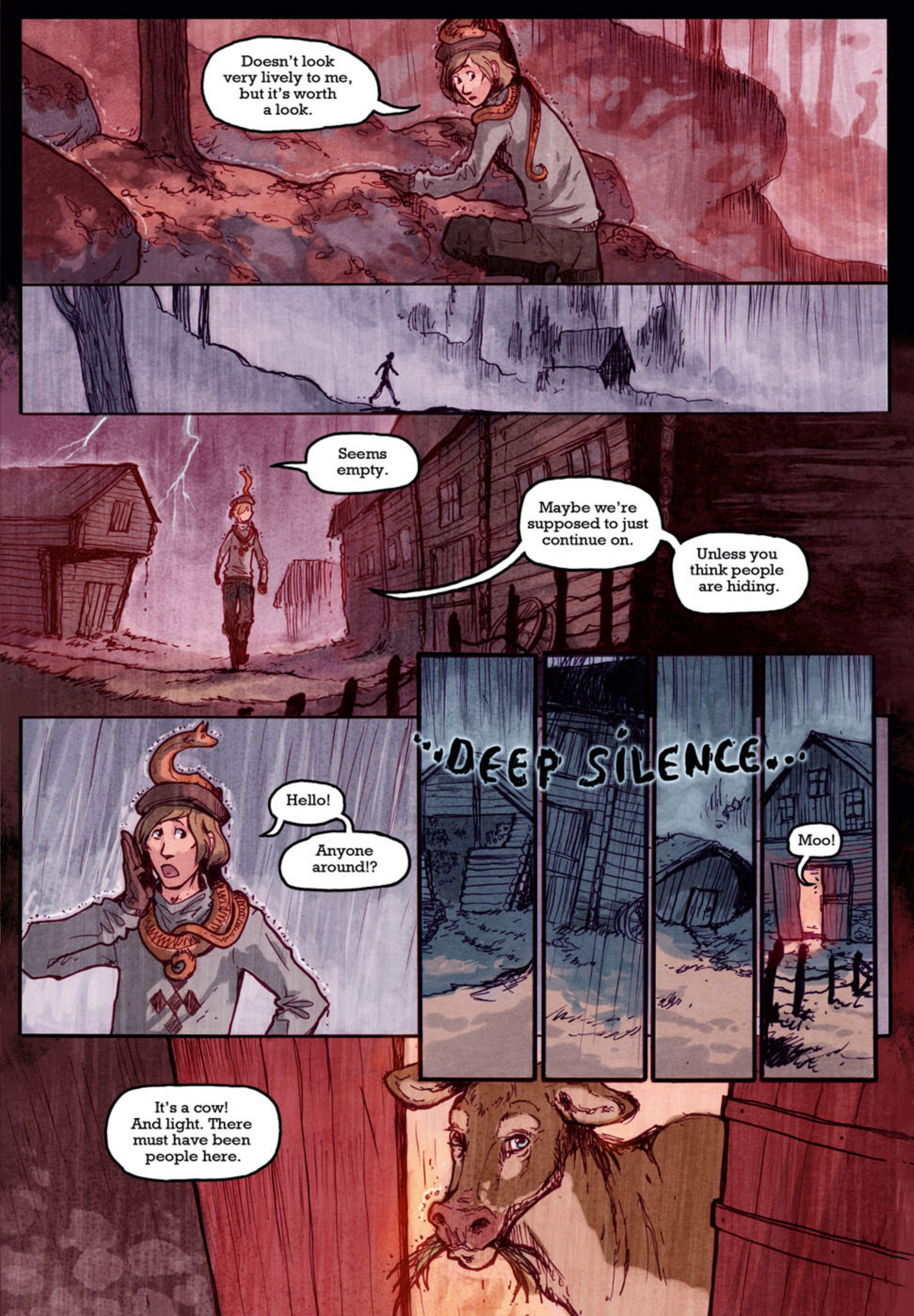

Do you think I'm some sort of dragon now?
Because I think I'm a dragon!
Eh, to me it looks like you're just a common snake.
Are you able to breathe fire?
Doesn't feel like it.
AAAUUUUU!!!
I don't want to be a snake!
Snakes are morons, and gross!
Don't cry.
I for one am just happy to finally be out of those damp clothes.
TIP!
WOOOOSH!!!

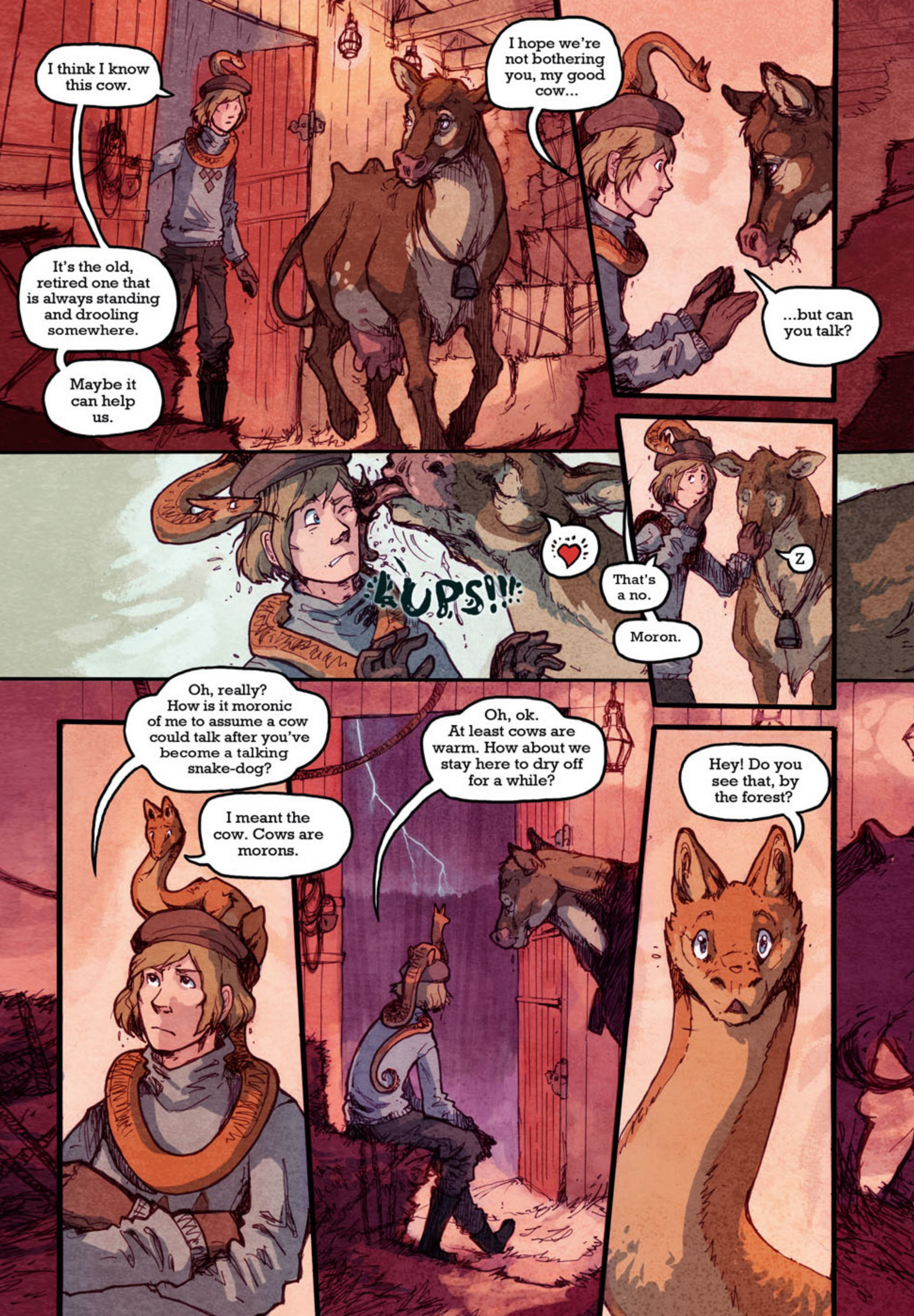

Aww, I don't like the rain. My fur starts to smell.
I bet the fox is doing this just for fun.
What? I haven't done anything!
Or, if I did, I swear it was an accident!
Hiii, again! And good work, both of you!
Everything went just as I had so wisely planned.
Are you able to see me?
Ehh, barely.
How about now? Better, or worse?
Worse! Infinitely worse, please change back! Change back!
As you wish.
So, there's now a whole pack of little humans and their caretakers back in your village. Safe and sound!
And I'll look after them, don't you worry! Or actually I don't need to do anything, as long as I keep their time frozen.
How nice for you. Just don't mess up anything more on your part. If you do, I quit. This is irritating enough already.
He means we'll get mad and tell on you to your parents!
Teehee, I never mess up, silly you!

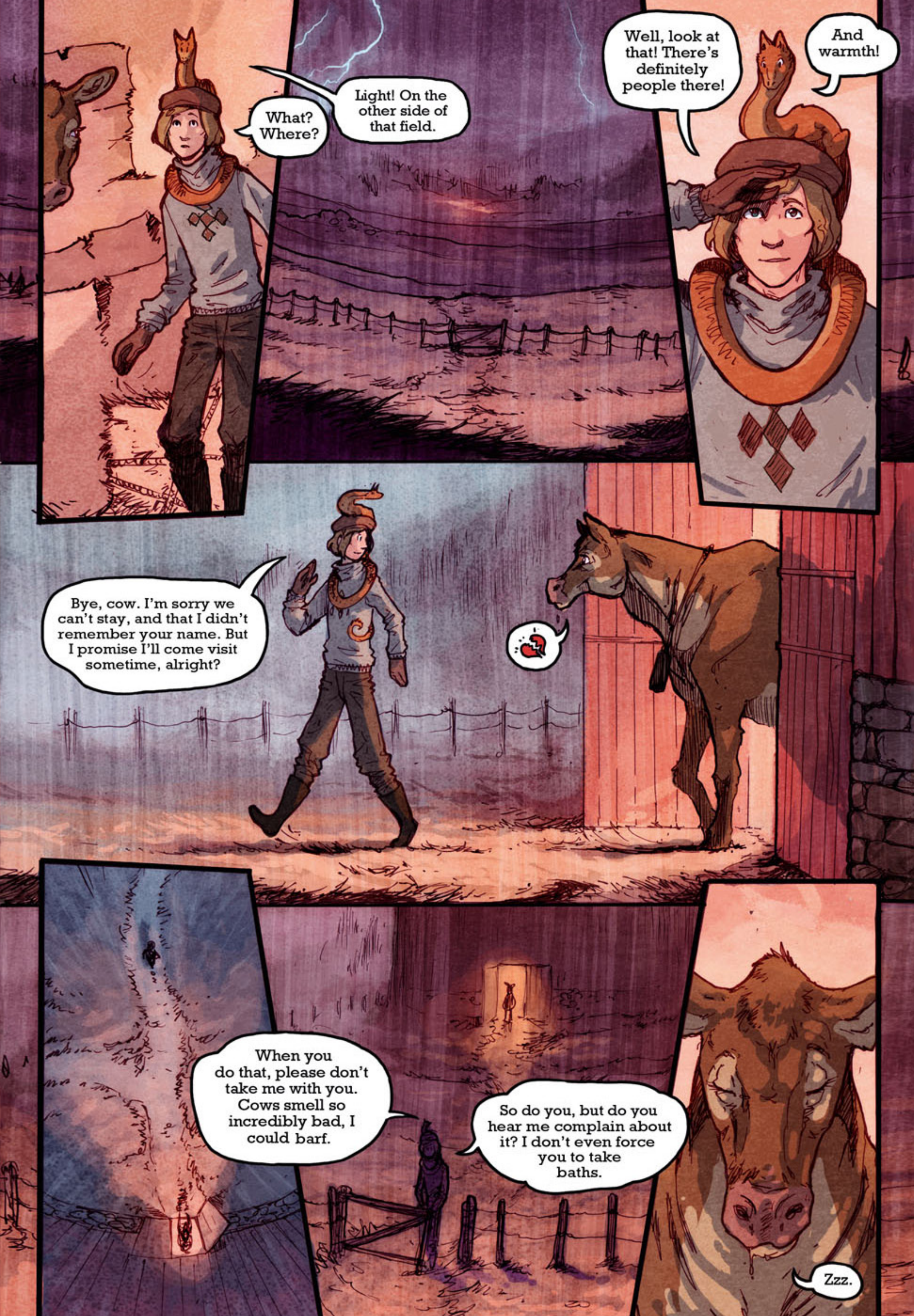

But hey, you know what you have to do, so how about I get out of here, eh?
TÖKS!
Eek!
Could you maybe take care of this rain while you're still here?
Noooo can do, pals. I'm not authorized to touch things in the dream realm, no matter what. I'd get yelled at.
So whose dream is this? Mine or Hannu's?
Hehee, neither. In a way this is my dream.
We Foxes don't really have dreams, because we don't sleep...
...but I created an artificial dream state where I encapsulated all of your souls. Otherwise they would have continued on to the land of eternal sleep.
Can you imagine the grounding I would have got for that?
And hey, if we do our jobs well, quietly and before my parents find out, I won't get into any trouble at all!

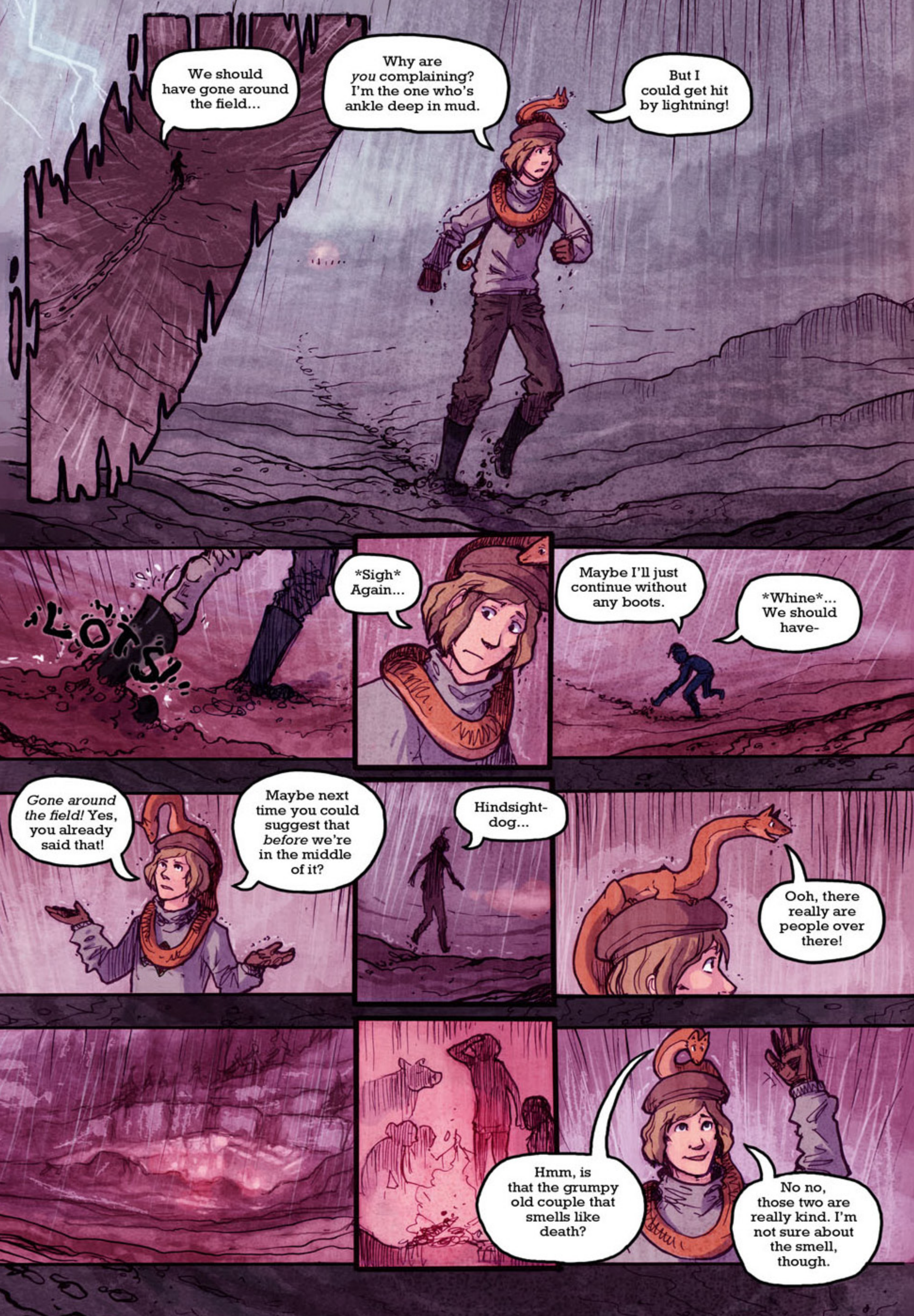

Back to work, guys! Go us!
I'll go eat dinner now, bye-zies!
That stupid little redtail irks me so much!
All animals irk you.
Clearly we're not supposed to head in that direction next.
Up there, then?
I guess so.
Oh, and I was right: you're a snake, if this trinket is to be trusted.
Bah.
At least snakes are better than squirrels.

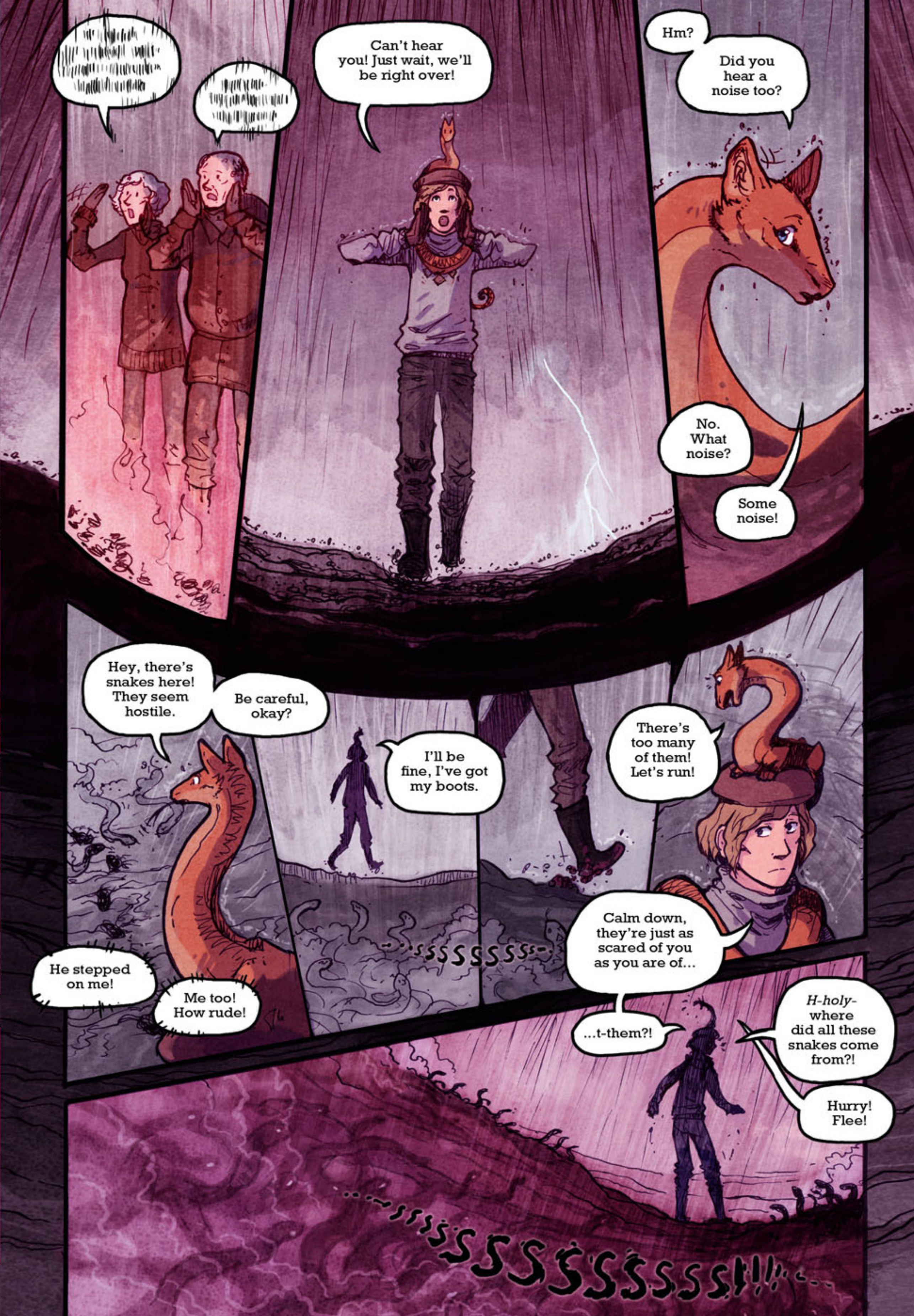

This rain makes me feel really sad. And cold. *And* sleepy!
Are we on top of the hill soon?
Getting close. We'll get a better view of the environment from there.
That's an environment I approve of!
Looks like an old farm house.
At least we'll get out of the rain.
Hopefully it's warm too, or I'll get pneumonia and die.

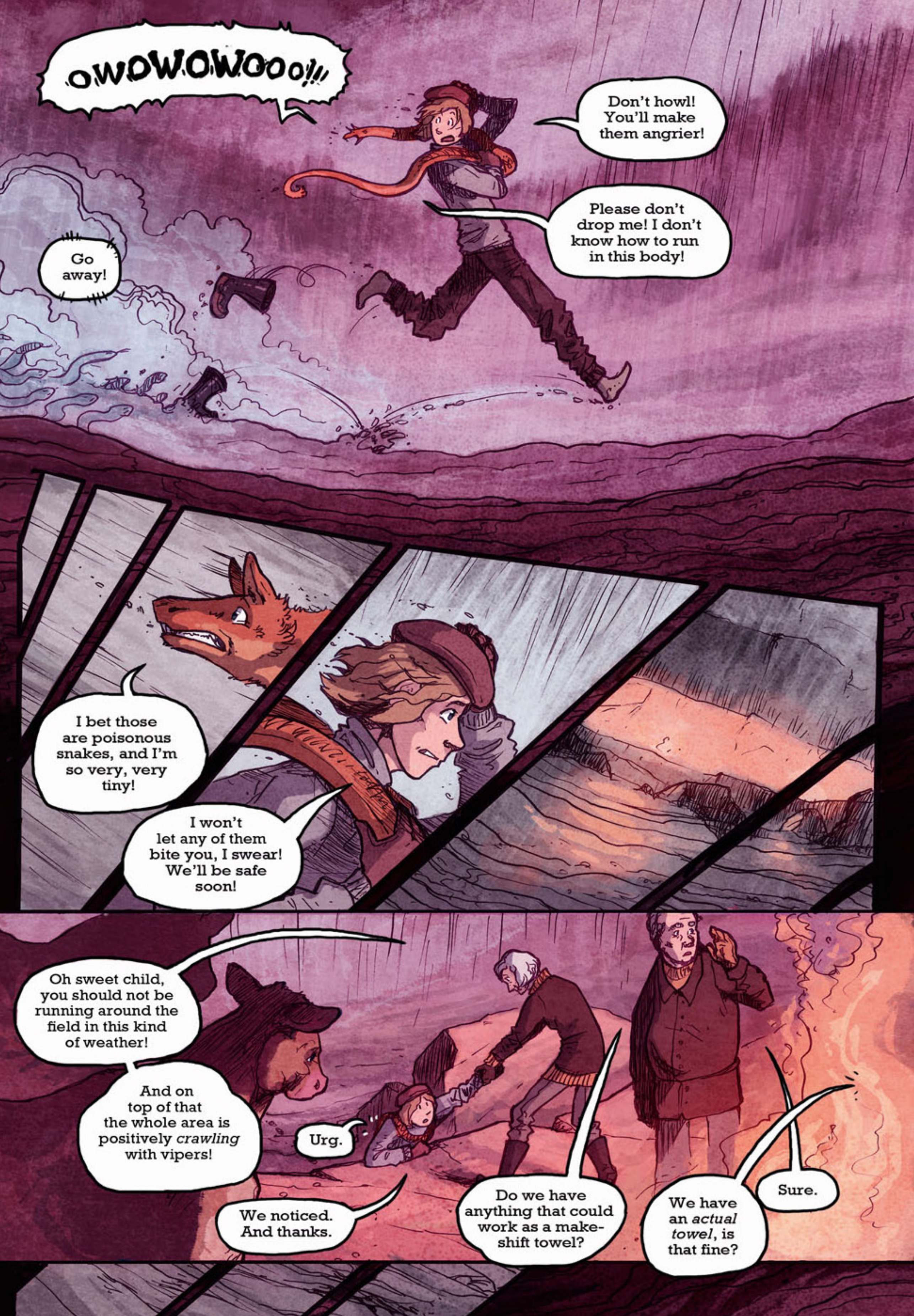

Doesn't look very lively to me, but it's worth a look.
Seems empty.
Maybe we're supposed to just continue on.
Unless you think people are hiding.
Hello!
Anyone around!?
...DEEP SILENCE...
Moo!
It's a cow! And light. There must have been people here.

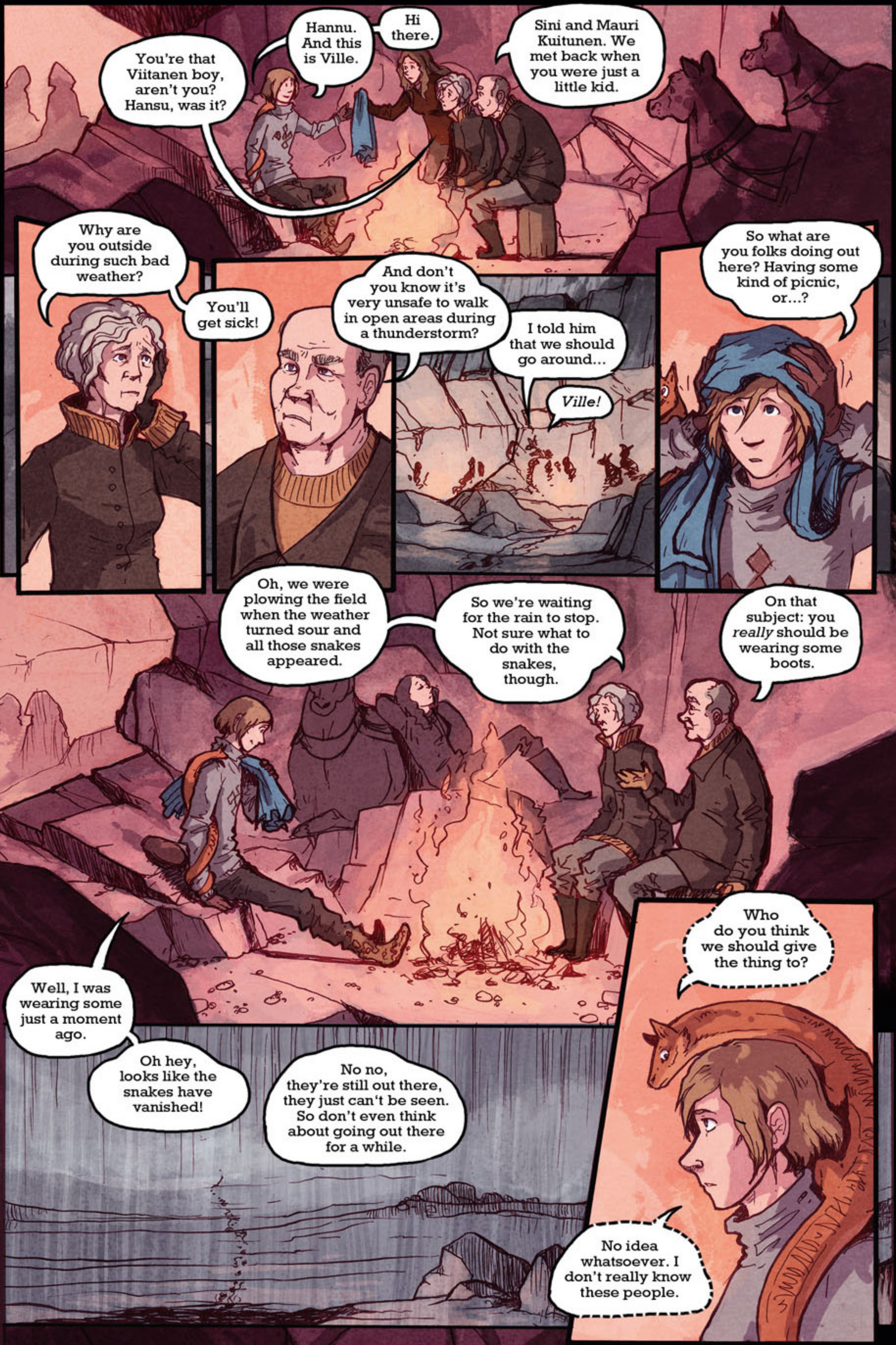

I think I know this cow.
It's the old, retired one that is always standing and drooling somewhere.
Maybe it can help us.
I hope we're not bothering you, my good cow...
...but can you talk?
LUPS!!!
That's a no.
Moron.
Z
Oh, really? How is it moronic of me to assume a cow could talk after you've become a talking snake-dog?
I meant the cow. Cows are morons.
Oh, ok. At least cows are warm. How about we stay here to dry off for a while?
Hey! Do you see that, by the forest?

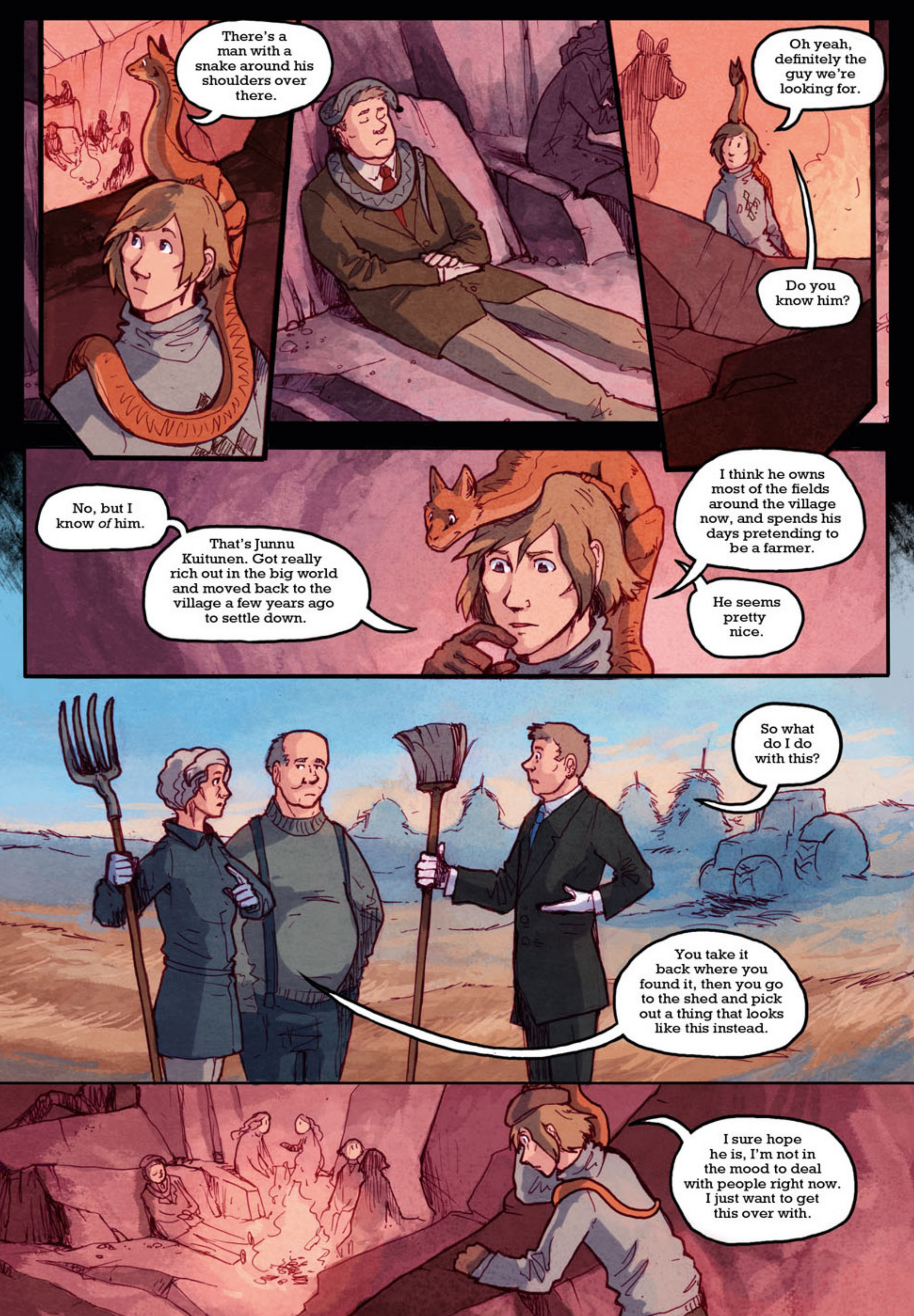

What? Where?
Light! On the other side of that field.
Well, look at that! There's definitely people there!
And warmth!
Bye, cow. I'm sorry we can't stay, and that I didn't remember your name. But I promise I'll come visit sometime, alright?
When you do that, please don't take me with you. Cows smell so incredibly bad, I could barf.
So do you, but do you hear me complain about it? I don't even force you to take baths.
Zzz.

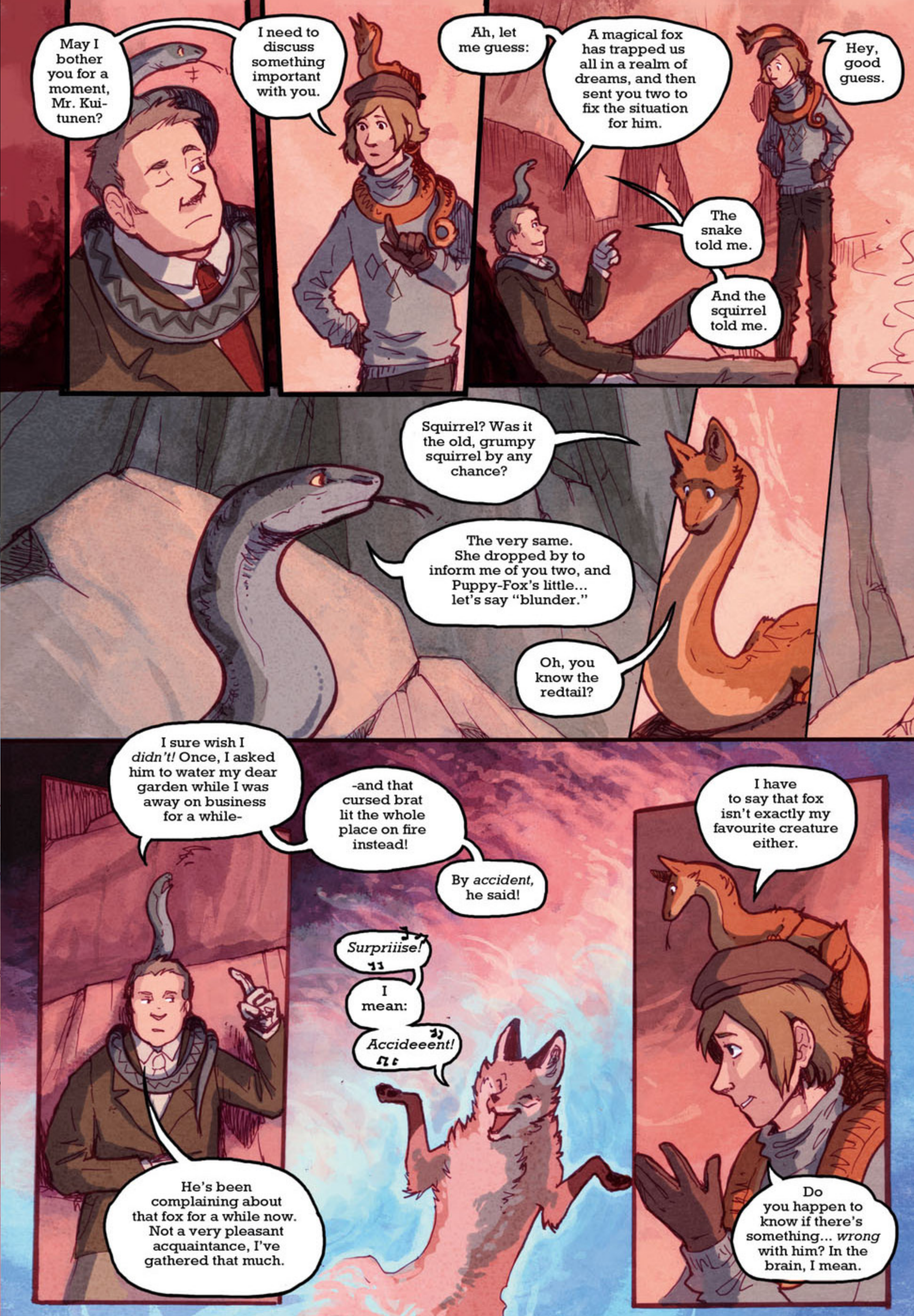

We should have gone around the field...
Why are *you* complaining? I'm the one who's ankle deep in mud.
But I could get hit by lightning!
LOTS
Sigh Again...
Maybe I'll just continue without any boots.
Whine... We should have-
Gone around the field! Yes, you already said that!
Maybe next time you could suggest that *before* we're in the middle of it?
Hindsight-dog...
Ooh, there really are people over there!
Hmm, is that the grumpy old couple that smells like death?
No no, those two are really kind. I'm not sure about the smell, though.

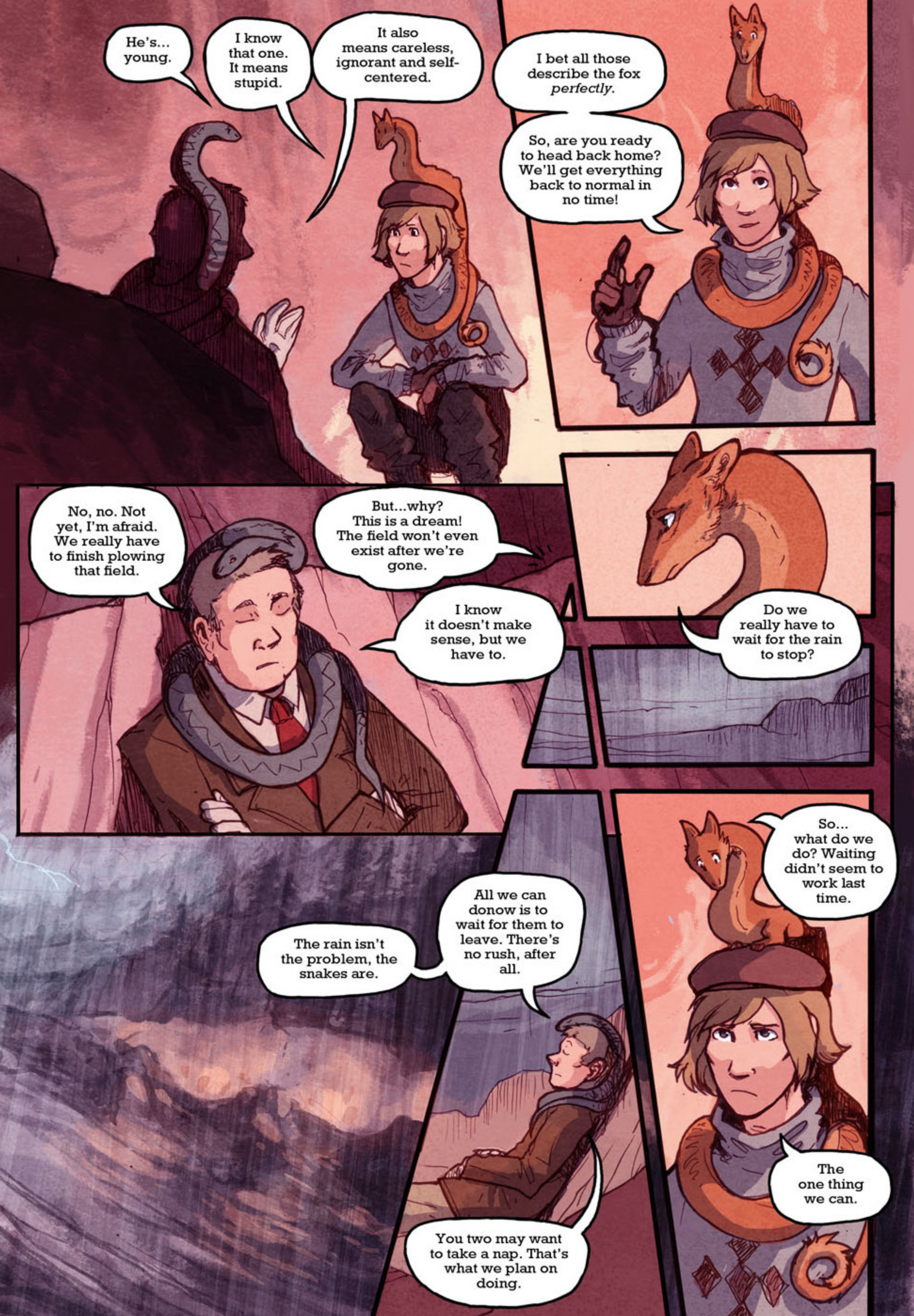

Can't hear you! Just wait, we'll be right over!
Hm?
Did you hear a noise too?
No. What noise?
Some noise!
Hey, there's snakes here! They seem hostile.
Be careful, okay?
I'll be fine, I've got my boots.
There's too many of them! Let's run!
He stepped on me!
Me too! How rude!
...sSSSSSSs...
Calm down, they're just as scared of you as you are of...
...t-them?!
H-holy- where did all these snakes come from?!
Hurry! Flee!
...sssSSSSSSSSSS!!!...

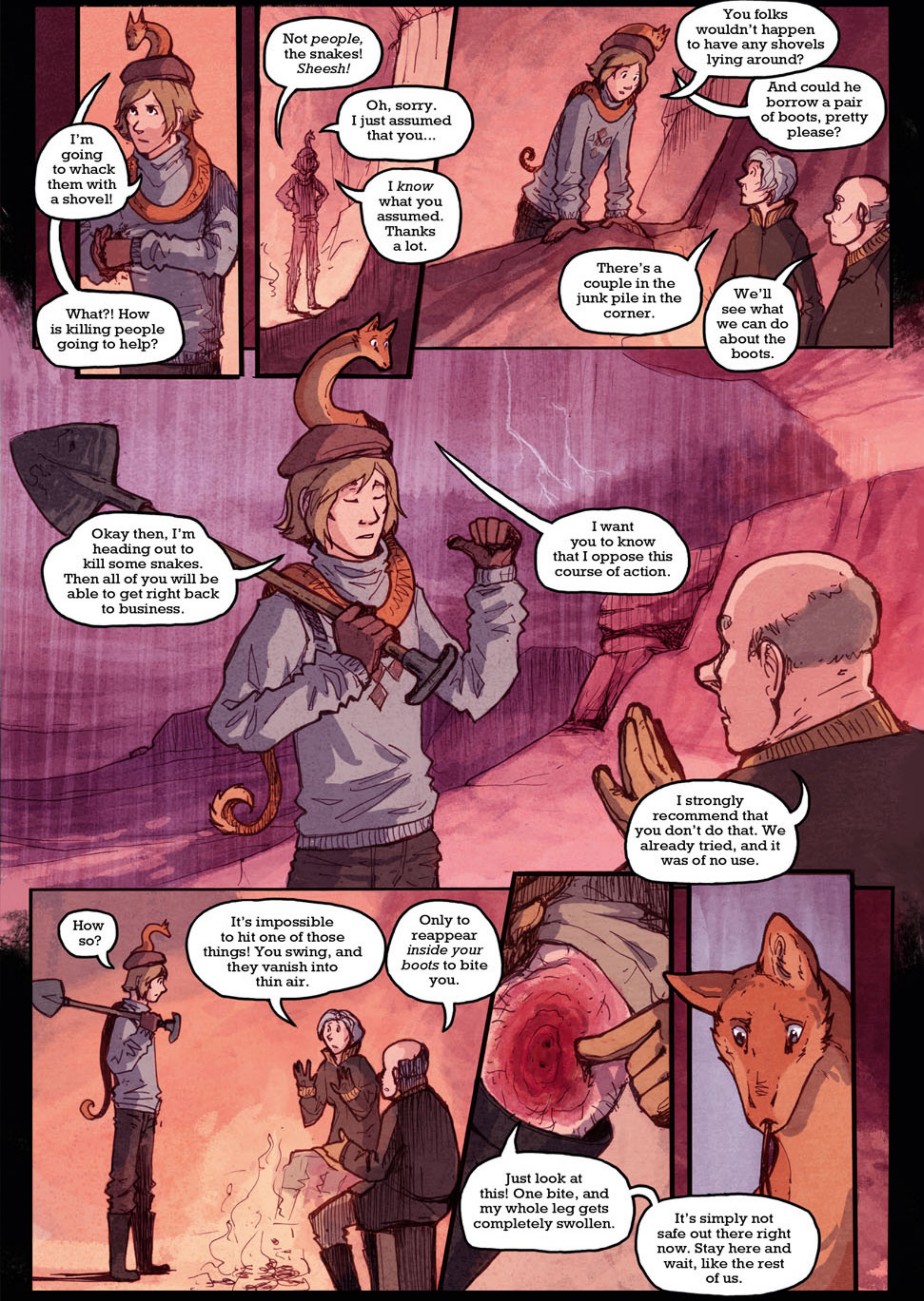

OWOWOWOOOO!!!
Don't howl! You'll make them angrier!
Please don't drop me! I don't know how to run in this body!
Go away!
I bet those are poisonous snakes, and I'm so very, very tiny!
I won't let any of them bite you, I swear! We'll be safe soon!
Oh sweet child, you should not be running around the field in this kind of weather!
And on top of that the whole area is positively *crawling* with vipers!
Urg.
We noticed. And thanks.
Do we have anything that could work as a make-shift towel?
We have an *actual towel*, is that fine?
Sure.

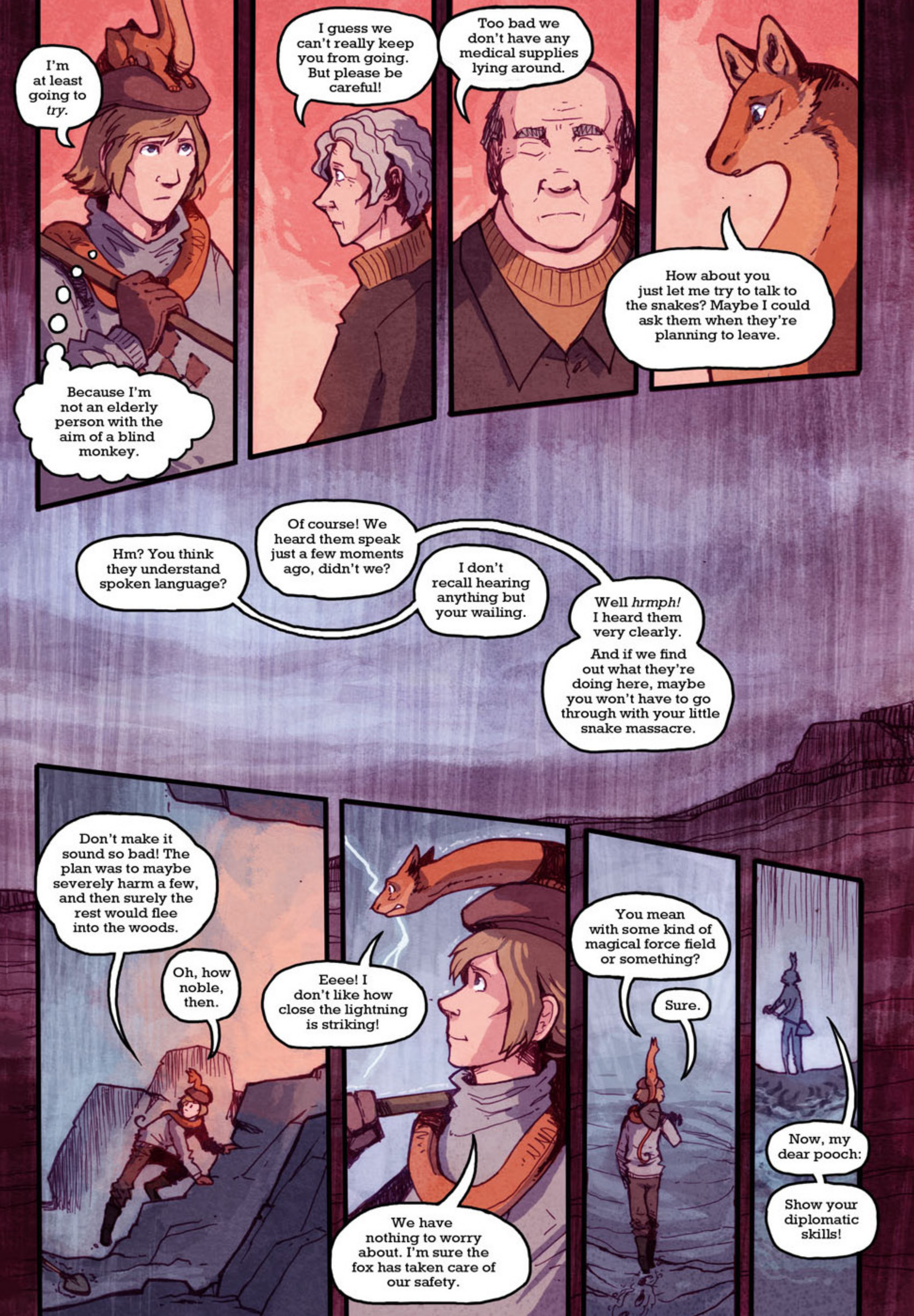

You're that Viitanen boy, aren't you? Hansu, was it?
Hannu. And this is Ville.
Hi there.
Sini and Mauri Kuitunen. We met back when you were just a little kid.
Why are you outside during such bad weather?
You'll get sick!
And don't you know it's very unsafe to walk in open areas during a thunderstorm?
I told him that we should go around...
Ville!
So what are you folks doing out here? Having some kind of picnic, or...?
Oh, we were plowing the field when the weather turned sour and all those snakes appeared.
So we're waiting for the rain to stop. Not sure what to do with the snakes, though.
On that subject: you *really* should be wearing some boots.
Well, I was wearing some just a moment ago.
Oh hey, looks like the snakes have vanished!
No no, they're still out there, they just can't be seen. So don't even think about going out there for a while.
Who do you think we should give the thing to?
No idea whatsoever. I don't really know these people.

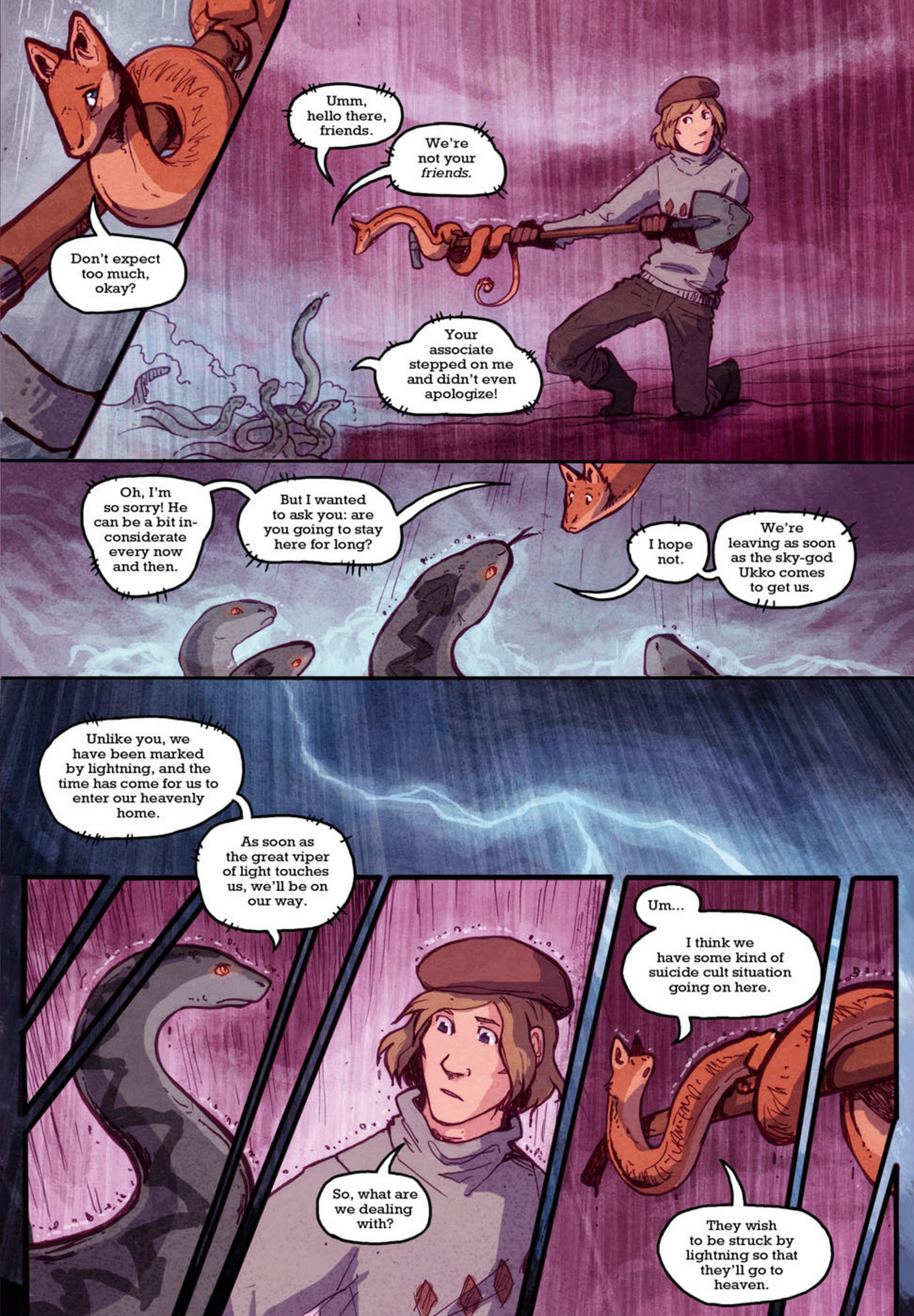

There's a man with a snake around his shoulders over there.
Oh yeah, definitely the guy we're looking for.
Do you know him?
No, but I know *of* him.
That's Junnu Kuitunen. Got really rich out in the big world and moved back to the village a few years ago to settle down.
I think he owns most of the fields around the village now, and spends his days pretending to be a farmer.
He seems pretty nice.
So what do I do with this?
You take it back where you found it, then you go to the shed and pick out a thing that looks like this instead.
I sure hope he is, I'm not in the mood to deal with people right now. I just want to get this over with.

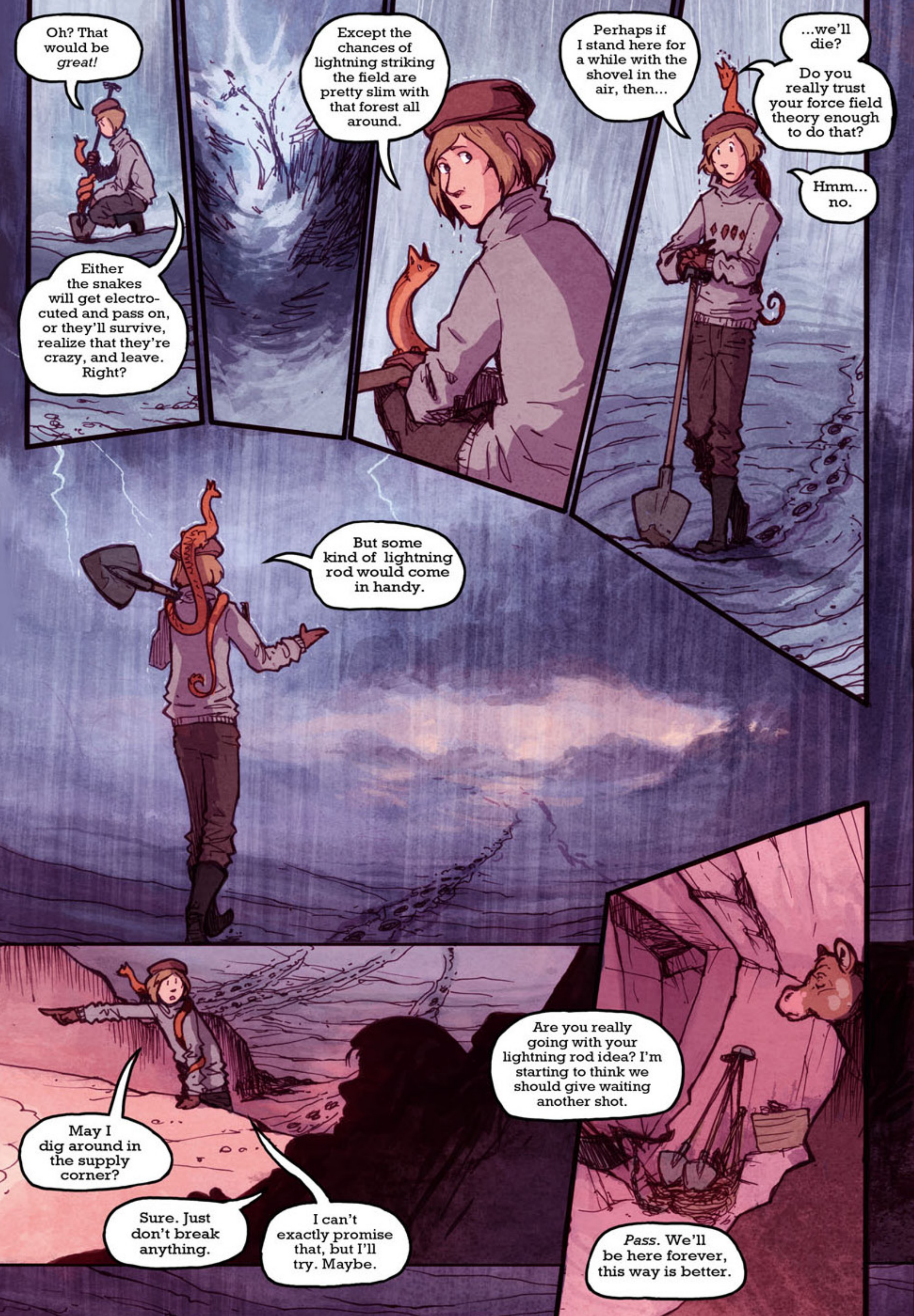

May I bother you for a moment, Mr. Kuitunen?
I need to discuss something important with you.
Ah, let me guess:
A magical fox has trapped us all in a realm of dreams, and then sent you two to fix the situation for him.
Hey, good guess.
The snake told me.
And the squirrel told me.
Squirrel? Was it the old, grumpy squirrel by any chance?
The very same. She dropped by to inform me of you two, and Puppy-Fox's little... let's say "blunder."
Oh, you know the redtail?
I sure wish I *didn't!* Once, I asked him to water my dear garden while I was away on business for a while-
-and that cursed brat lit the whole place on fire instead!
By *accident,* he said!
Surpriiise!
I mean:
Accideeent!
I have to say that fox isn't exactly my favourite creature either.
He's been complaining about that fox for a while now. Not a very pleasant acquaintance, I've gathered that much.
Do you happen to know if there's something... *wrong* with him? In the brain, I mean.

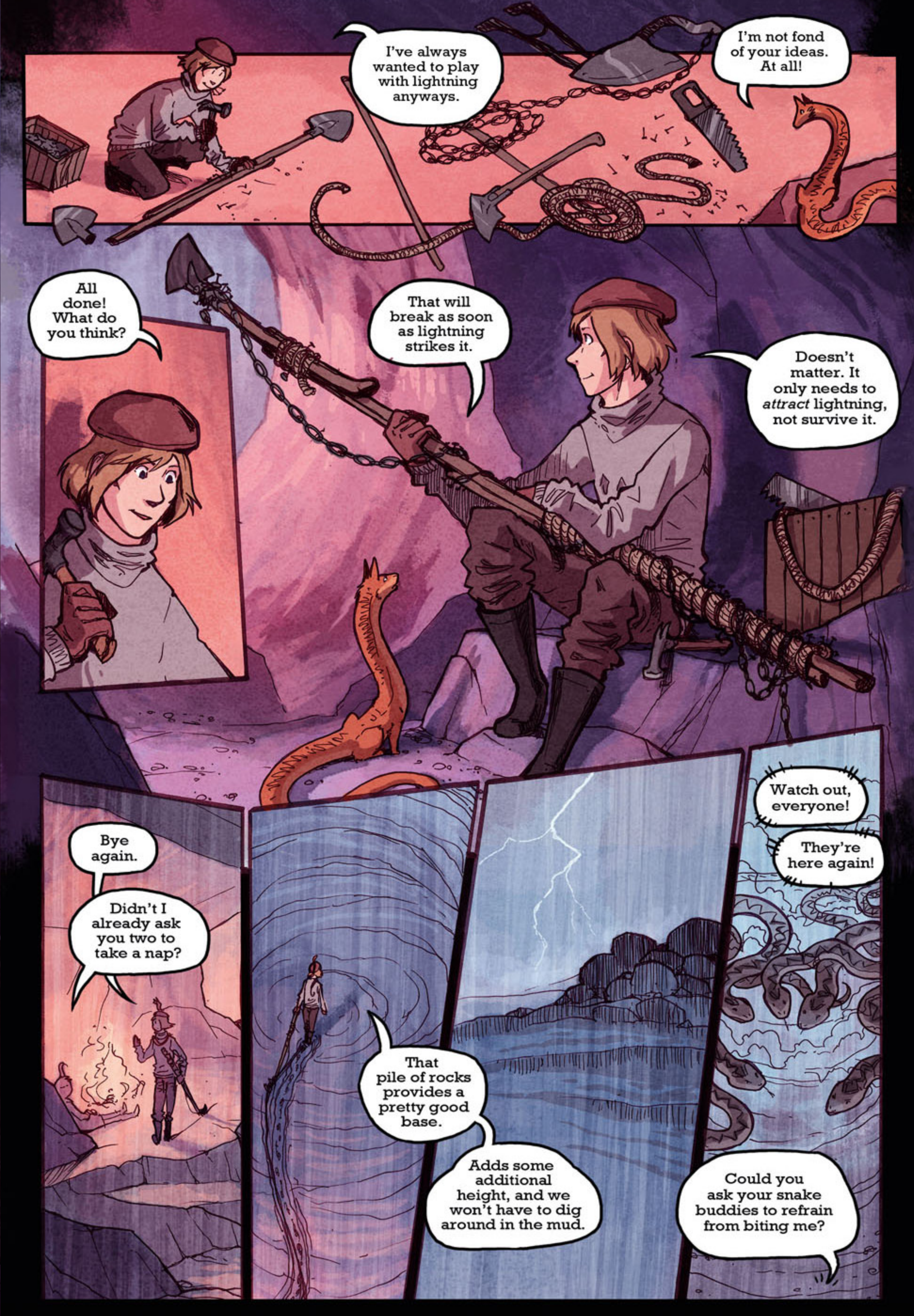

He's... young.
I know that one. It means stupid.
It also means careless, ignorant and self-centered.
I bet all those describe the fox *perfectly.*
So, are you ready to head back home? We'll get everything back to normal in no time!
No, no. Not yet, I'm afraid. We really have to finish plowing that field.
But...why? This is a dream! The field won't even exist after we're gone.
I know it doesn't make sense, but we have to.
Do we really have to wait for the rain to stop?
The rain isn't the problem, the snakes are.
All we can donow is to wait for them to leave. There's no rush, after all.
So... what do we do? Waiting didn't seem to work last time.
You two may want to take a nap. That's what we plan on doing.
The one thing we can.

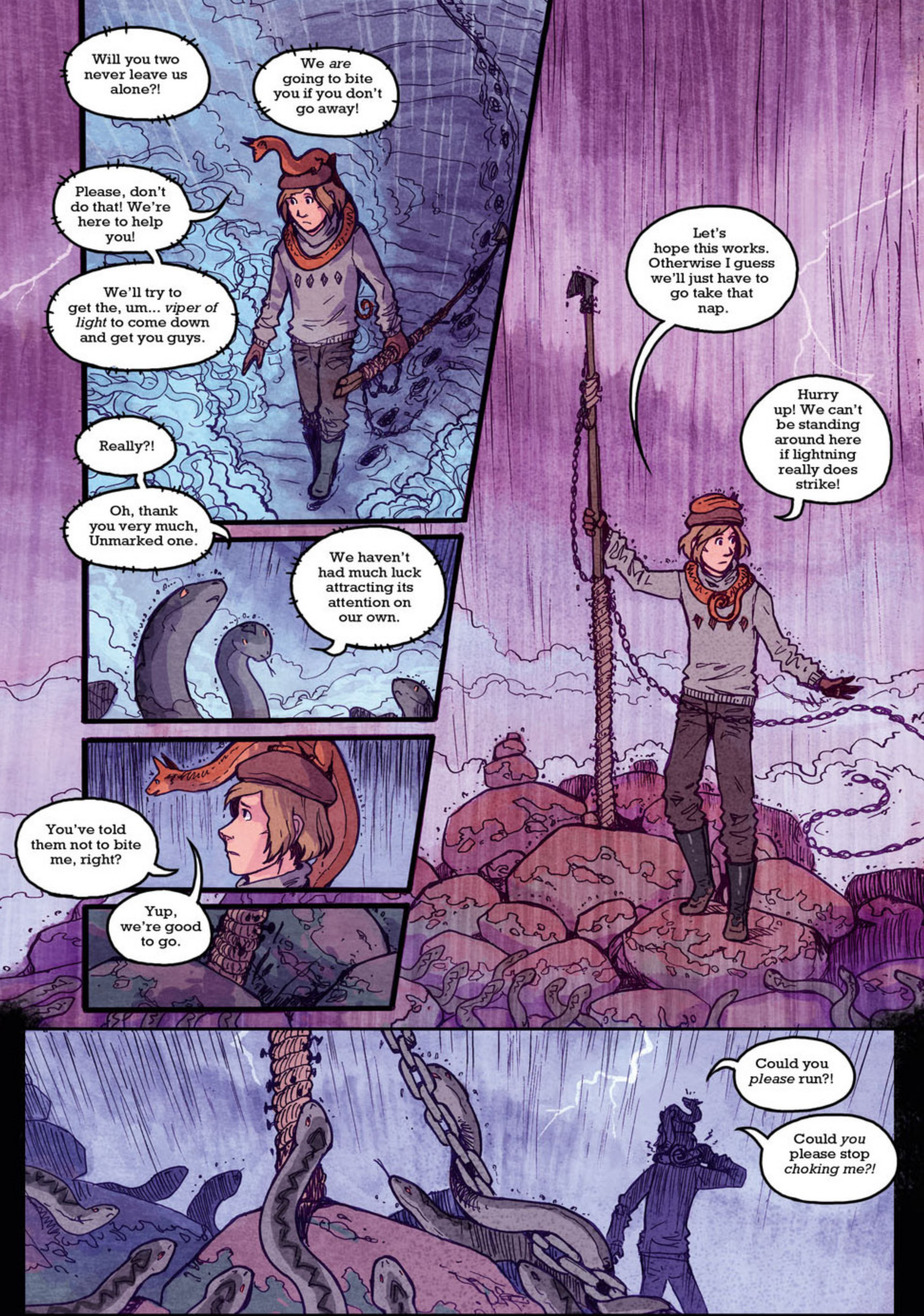

I'm going to whack them with a shovel!
What?! How is killing people going to help?
Not *people,* the snakes! *Sheesh!*
Oh, sorry. I just assumed that you...
I *know* what you assumed. Thanks a lot.
You folks wouldn't happen to have any shovels lying around?
And could he borrow a pair of boots, pretty please?
There's a couple in the junk pile in the corner.
We'll see what we can do about the boots.
Okay then, I'm heading out to kill some snakes. Then all of you will be able to get right back to business.
I want you to know that I oppose this course of action.
I strongly recommend that you don't do that. We already tried, and it was of no use.
How so?
It's impossible to hit one of those things! You swing, and they vanish into thin air.
Only to reappear *inside your boots* to bite you.
Just look at this! One bite, and my whole leg gets completely swollen.
It's simply not safe out there right now. Stay here and wait, like the rest of us.

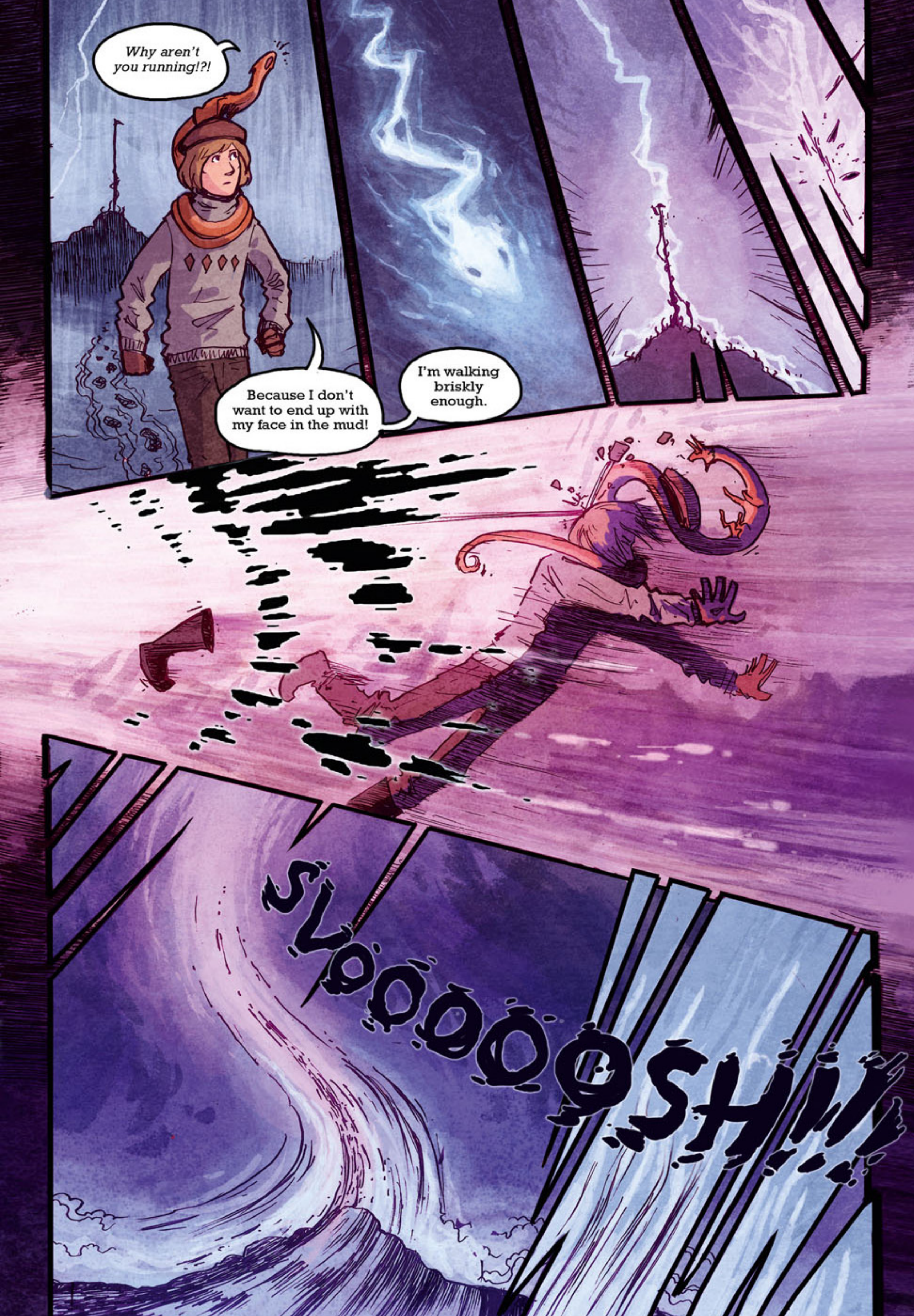

I'm at least going to *try.*
Because I'm not an elderly person with the aim of a blind monkey.
I guess we can't really keep you from going. But please be careful!
Too bad we don't have any medical supplies lying around.
How about you just let me try to talk to the snakes? Maybe I could ask them when they're planning to leave.
Hm? You think they understand spoken language?
Of course! We heard them speak just a few moments ago, didn't we?
I don't recall hearing anything but your wailing.
Well *hrmph!* I heard them very clearly.
And if we find out what they're doing here, maybe you won't have to go through with your little snake massacre.
Don't make it sound so bad! The plan was to maybe severely harm a few, and then surely the rest would flee into the woods.
Oh, how noble, then.
Eeee! I don't like how close the lightning is striking!
We have nothing to worry about. I'm sure the fox has taken care of our safety.
You mean with some kind of magical force field or something?
Sure.
Now, my dear pooch:
Show your diplomatic skills!

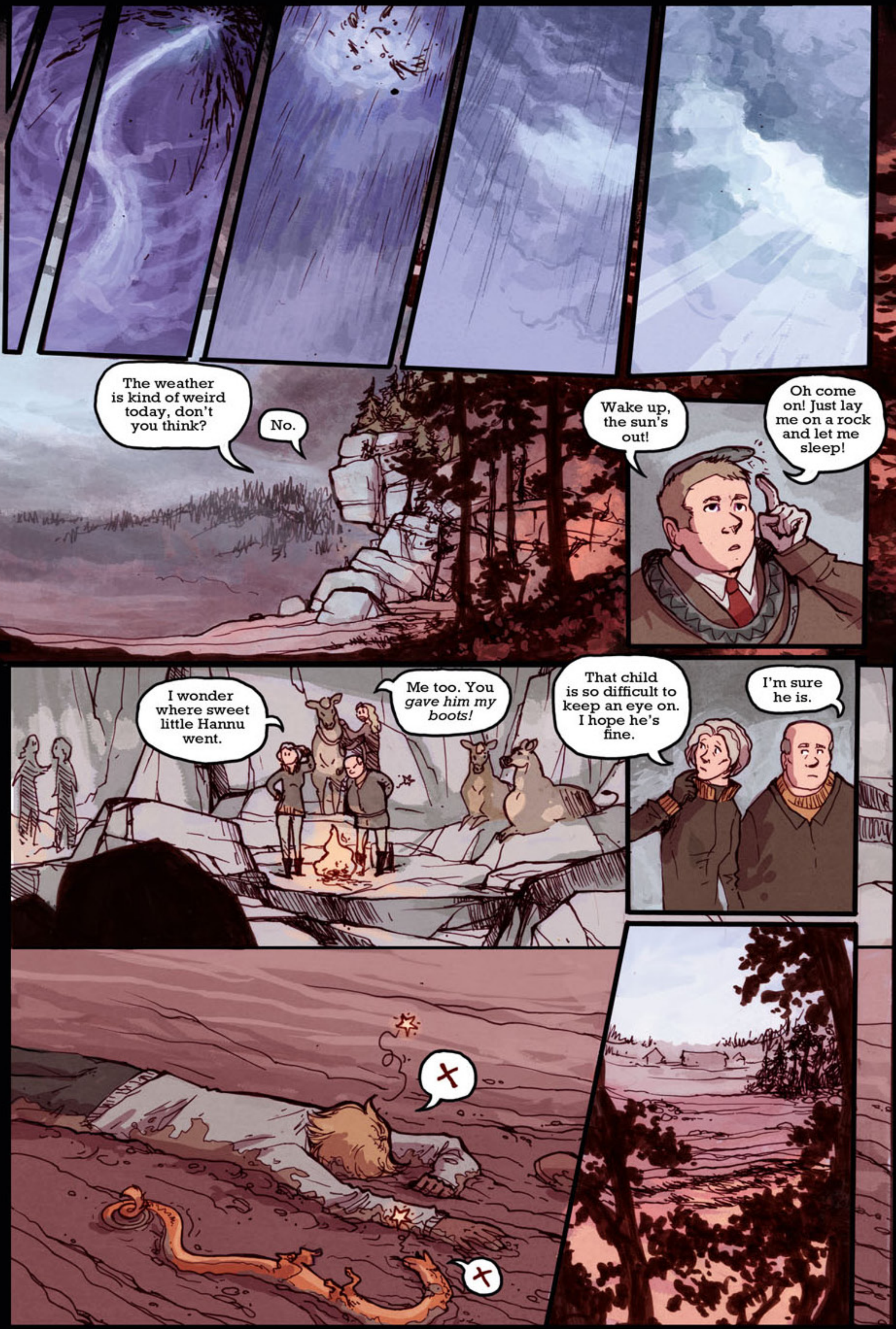

Don't expect too much, okay?
Umm, hello there, friends.
We're not your *friends.*
Your associate stepped on me and didn't even apologize!
Oh, I'm so sorry! He can be a bit inconsiderate every now and then.
But I wanted to ask you: are you going to stay here for long?
I hope not.
We're leaving as soon as the sky-god Ukko comes to get us.
Unlike you, we have been marked by lightning, and the time has come for us to enter our heavenly home.
As soon as the great viper of light touches us, we'll be on our way.
So, what are we dealing with?
Um...
I think we have some kind of suicide cult situation going on here.
They wish to be struck by lightning so that they'll go to heaven.

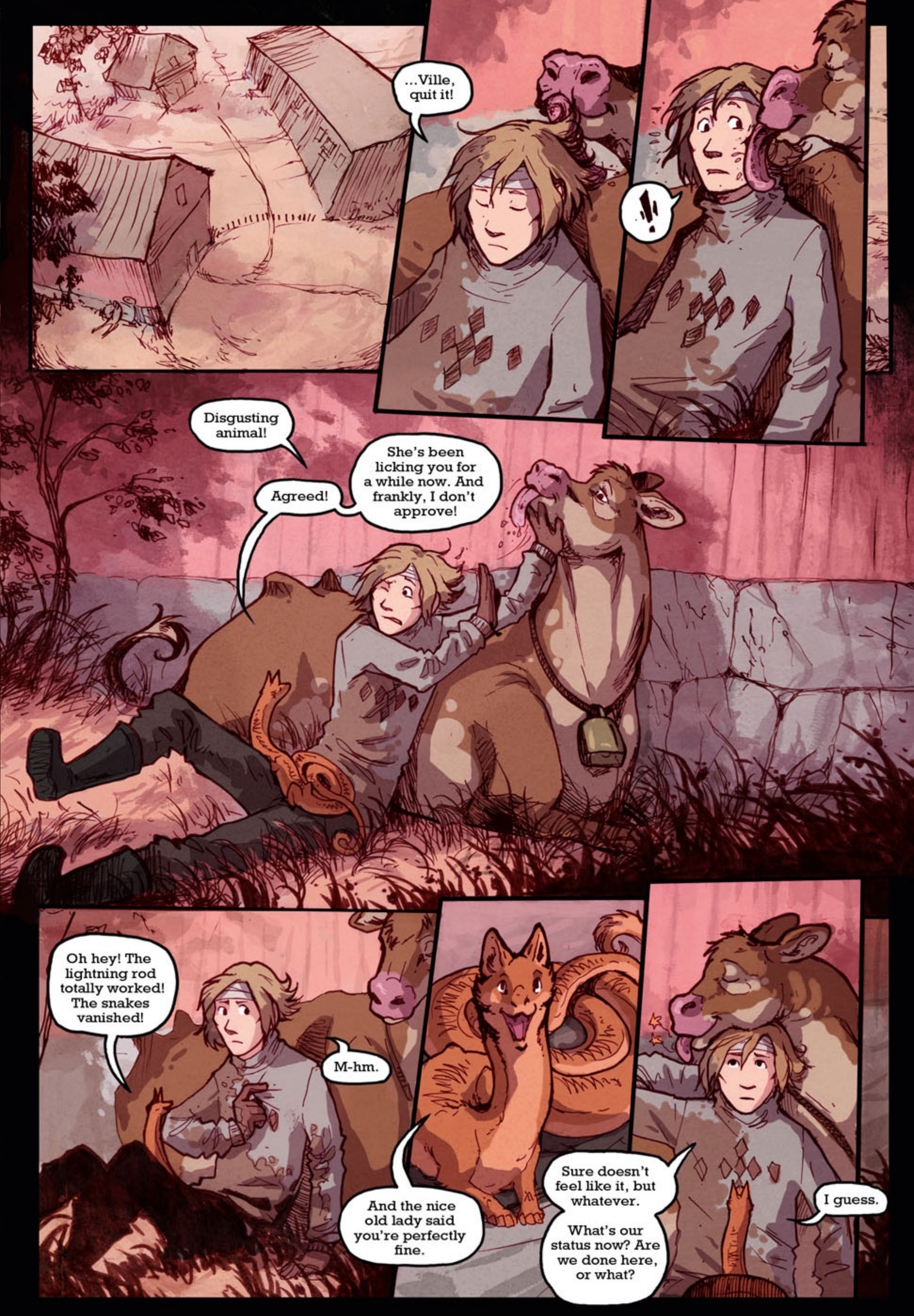

Oh? That would be *great!*
Either the snakes will get electrocuted and pass on, or they'll survive, realize that they're crazy, and leave. Right?
Except the chances of lightning striking the field are pretty slim with that forest all around.
Perhaps if I stand here for a while with the shovel in the air, then...
...we'll die?
Do you really trust your force field theory enough to do that?
Hmm... no.
But some kind of lightning rod would come in handy.
May I dig around in the supply corner?
Sure. Just don't break anything.
I can't exactly promise that, but I'll try. Maybe.
Are you really going with your lightning rod idea? I'm starting to think we should give waiting another shot.
Pass. We'll be here forever, this way is better.

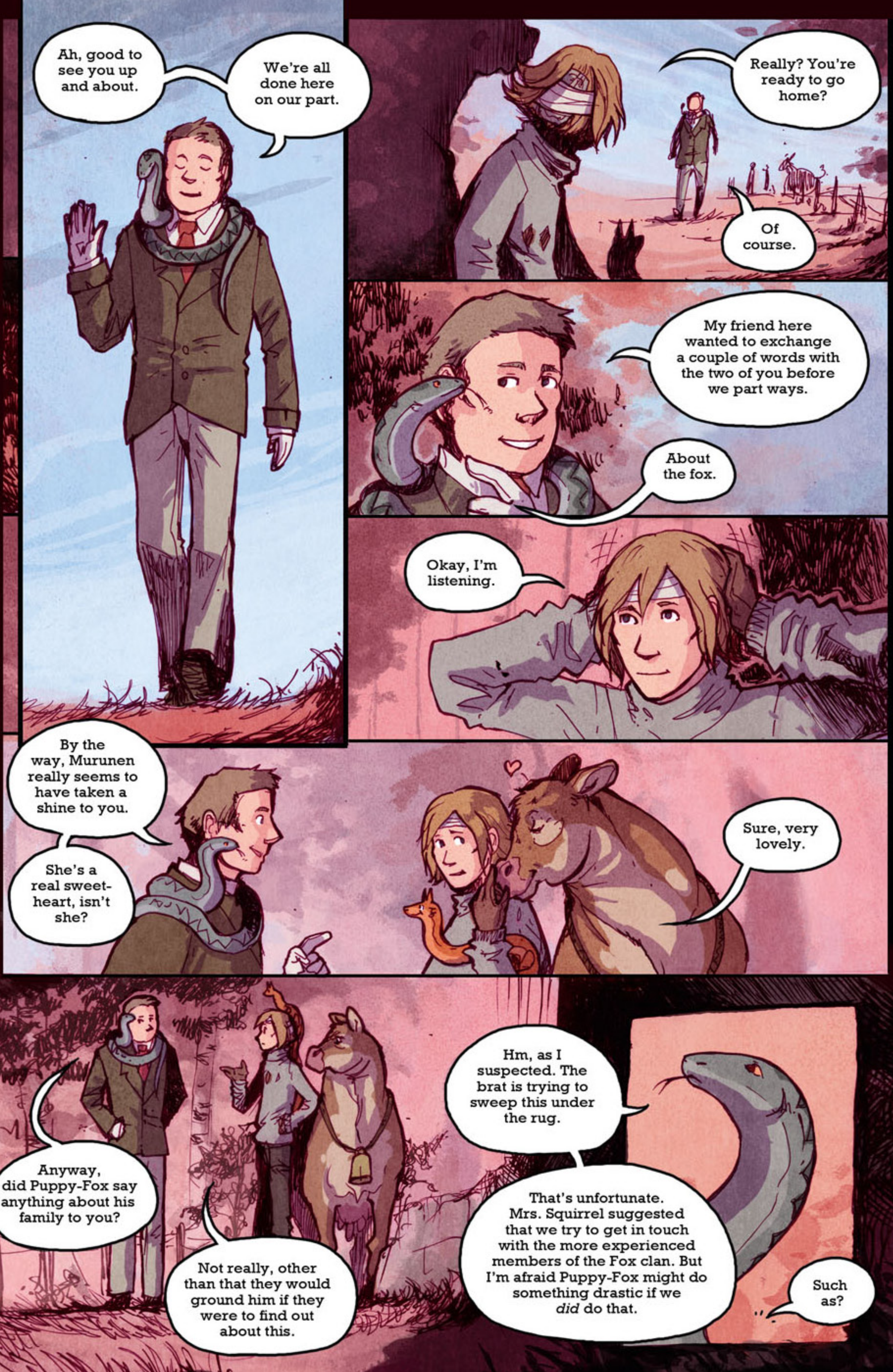

I've always wanted to play with lightning anyways.
I'm not fond of your ideas. At all!
All done! What do you think?
That will break as soon as lightning strikes it.
Doesn't matter. It only needs to *attract* lightning, not survive it.
Bye again.
Didn't I already ask you two to take a nap?
That pile of rocks provides a pretty good base.
Adds some additional height, and we won't have to dig around in the mud.
Watch out, everyone!
They're here again!
Could you ask your snake buddies to refrain from biting me?

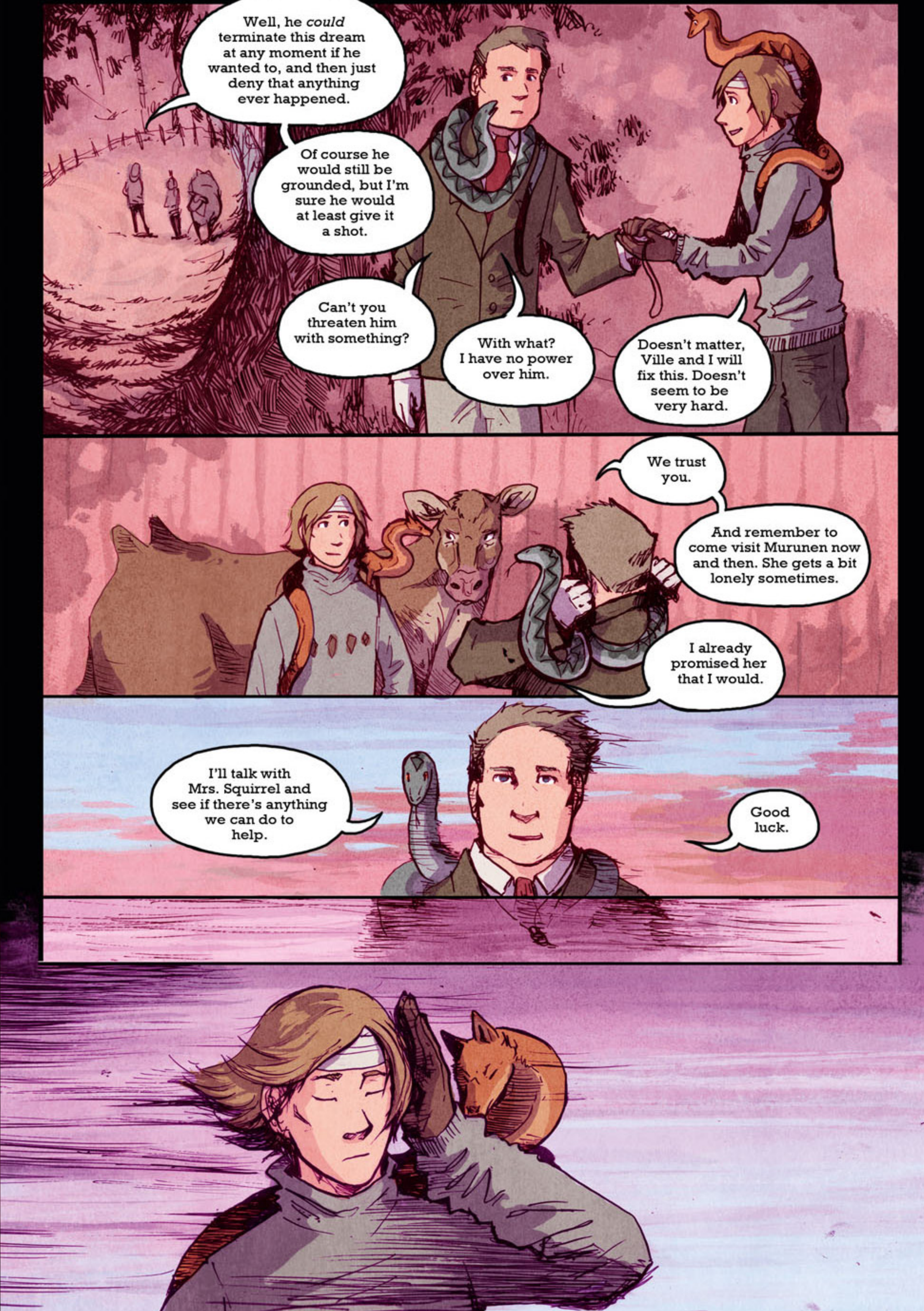

Will you two never leave us alone?!
We *are* going to bite you if you don't go away!
Please, don't do that! We're here to help you!
We'll try to get the, um... *viper of light* to come down and get you guys.
Really?!
Oh, thank you very much, Unmarked one.
We haven't had much luck attracting its attention on our own.
Let's hope this works. Otherwise I guess we'll just have to go take that nap.
Hurry up! We can't be standing around here if lightning really does strike!
You've told them not to bite me, right?
Yup, we're good to go.
Could you *please* run?!
Could *you* please stop *choking me?!*

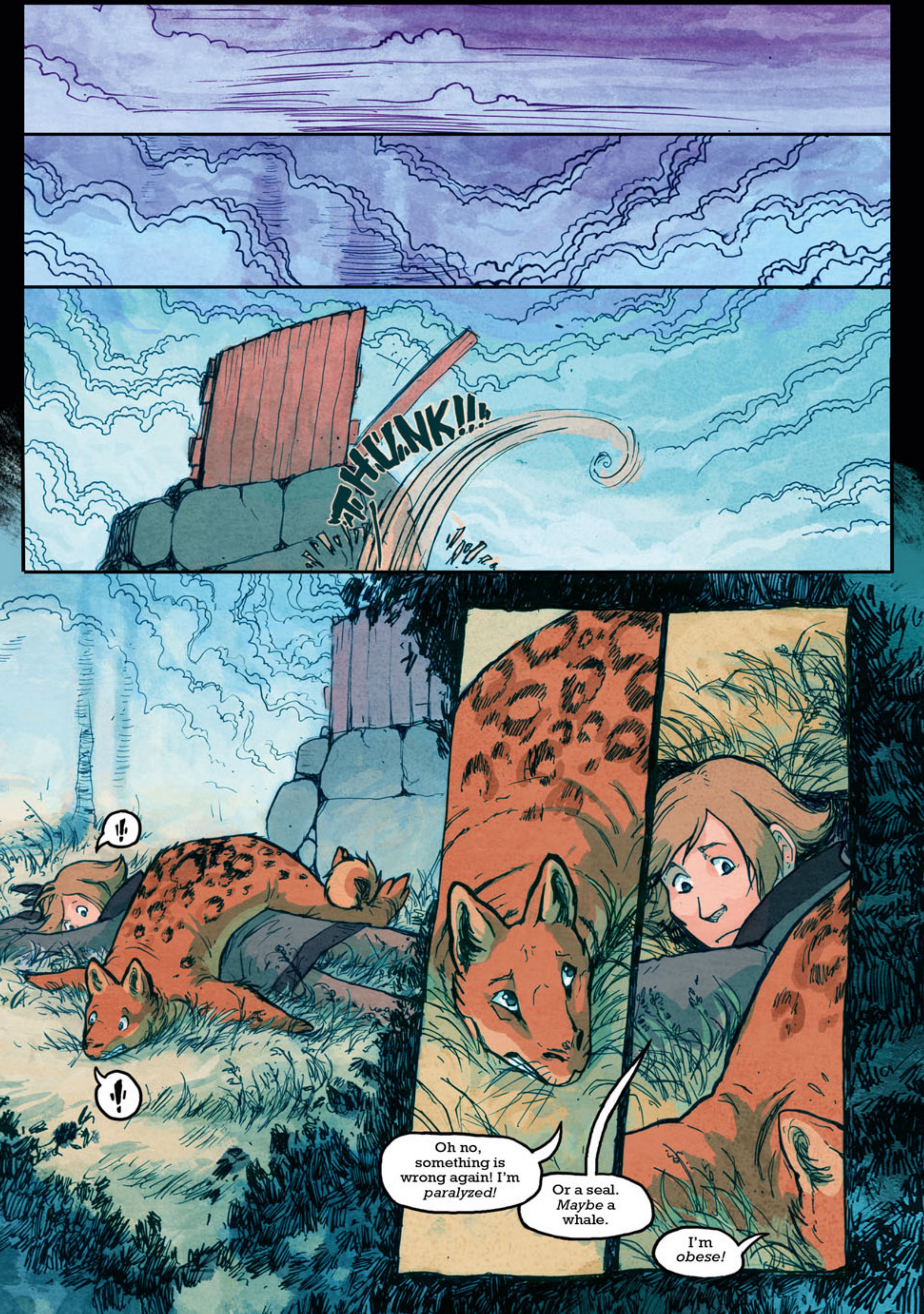

Why aren't you running!?!
Because I don't want to end up with my face in the mud!
I'm walking briskly enough.
SVOOOOOOSH!!!

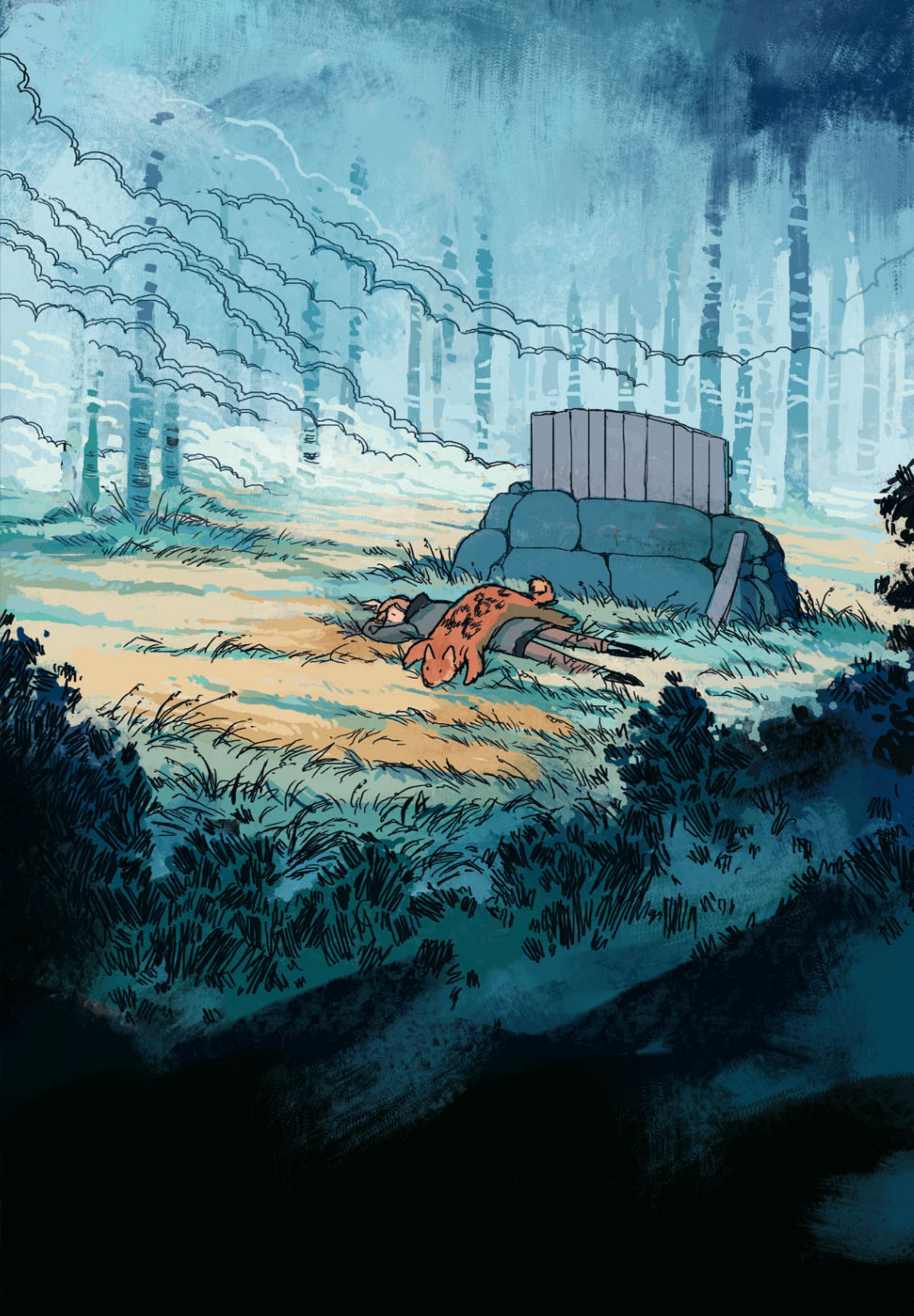

The weather is kind of weird today, don't you think?
No.
Wake up, the sun's out!
Oh come on! Just lay me on a rock and let me sleep!
I wonder where sweet little Hannu went.
Me too. You *gave him my boots!*
That child is so difficult to keep an eye on. I hope he's fine.
I'm sure he is.


...Ville, quit it!
!
Disgusting animal!
Agreed!
She's been licking you for a while now. And frankly, I don't approve!
Oh hey! The lightning rod totally worked! The snakes vanished!
M-hm.
And the nice old lady said you're perfectly fine.
Sure doesn't feel like it, but whatever.
What's our status now? Are we done here, or what?
I guess.


Ah, good to see you up and about.
We're all done here on our part.
Really? You're ready to go home?
Of course.
My friend here wanted to exchange a couple of words with the two of you before we part ways.
About the fox.
Okay, I'm listening.
By the way, Murunen really seems to have taken a shine to you.
She's a real sweetheart, isn't she?
Sure, very lovely.
Anyway, did Puppy-Fox say anything about his family to you?
Not really, other than that they would ground him if they were to find out about this.
Hm, as I suspected. The brat is trying to sweep this under the rug.
That's unfortunate. Mrs. Squirrel suggested that we try to get in touch with the more experienced members of the Fox clan. But I'm afraid Puppy-Fox might do something drastic if we *did* do that.
Such as?

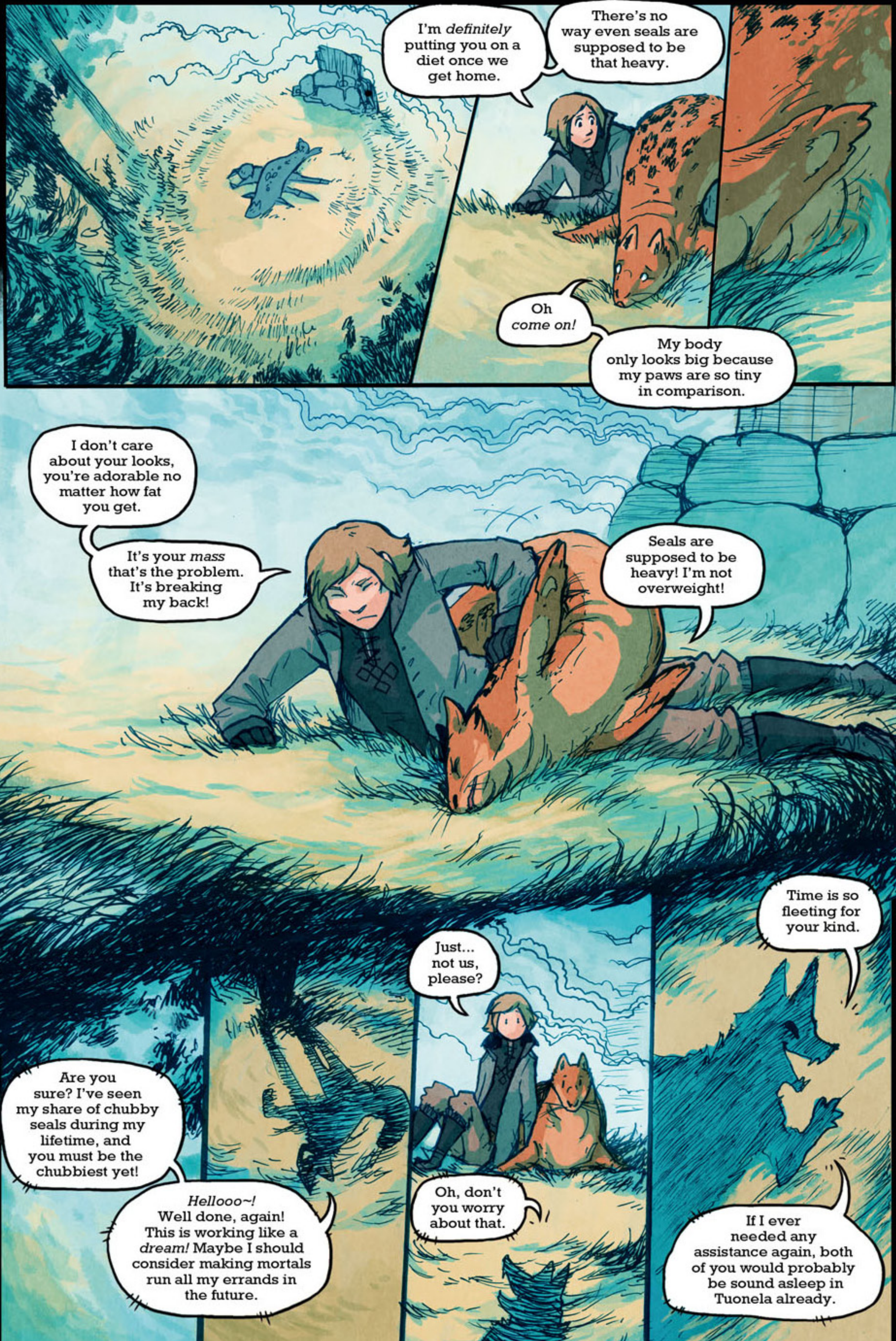

Well, he *could* terminate this dream at any moment if he wanted to, and then just deny that anything ever happened.
Of course he would still be grounded, but I'm sure he would at least give it a shot.
Can't you threaten him with something?
With what? I have no power over him.
Doesn't matter, Ville and I will fix this. Doesn't seem to be very hard.
We trust you.
And remember to come visit Murunen now and then. She gets a bit lonely sometimes.
I already promised her that I would.
I'll talk with Mrs. Squirrel and see if there's anything we can do to help.
Good luck.

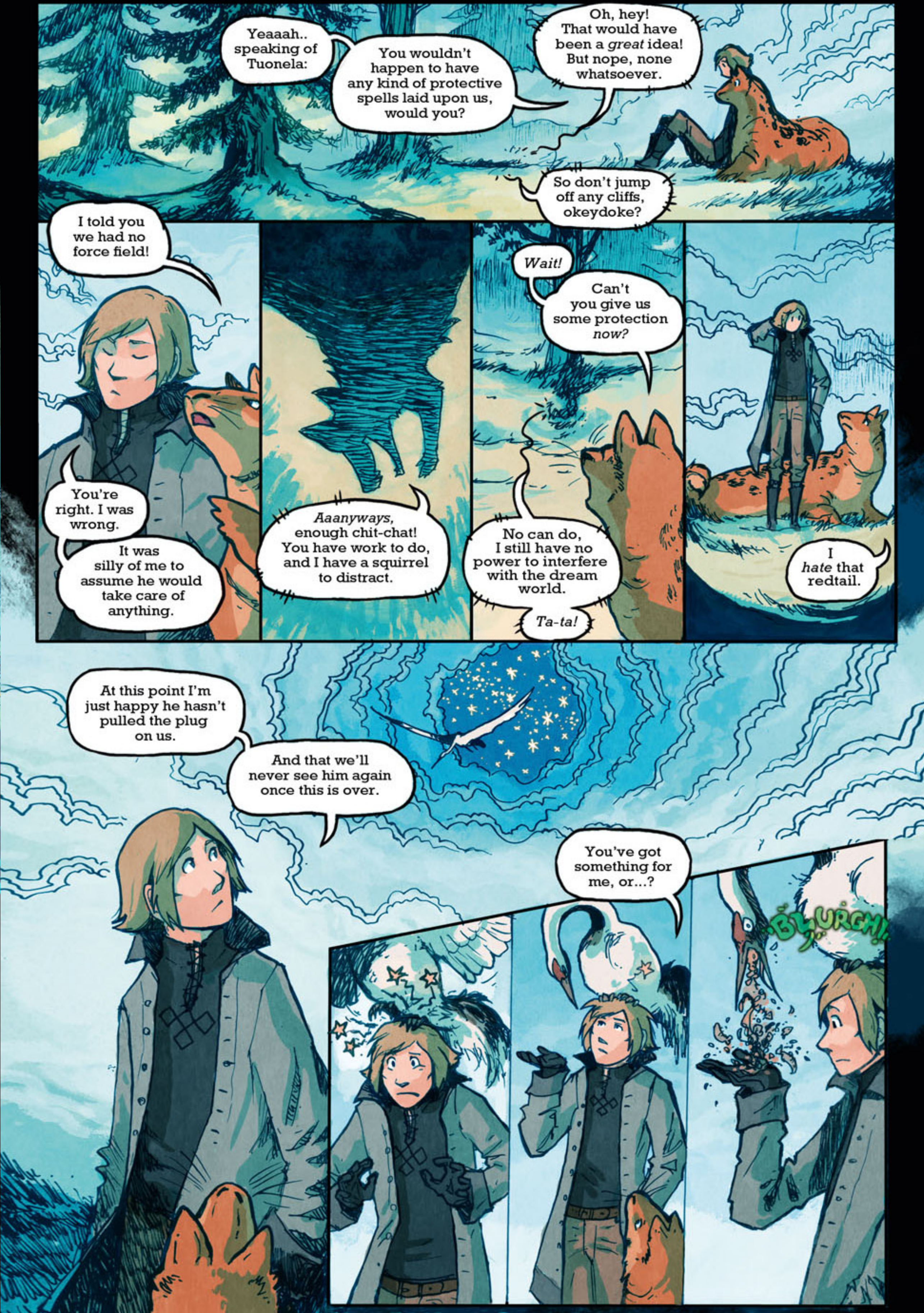

THUNK!!!
!
!
Oh no, something is wrong again! I'm *paralyzed!*
Or a seal. *Maybe* a whale.
I'm *obese!*

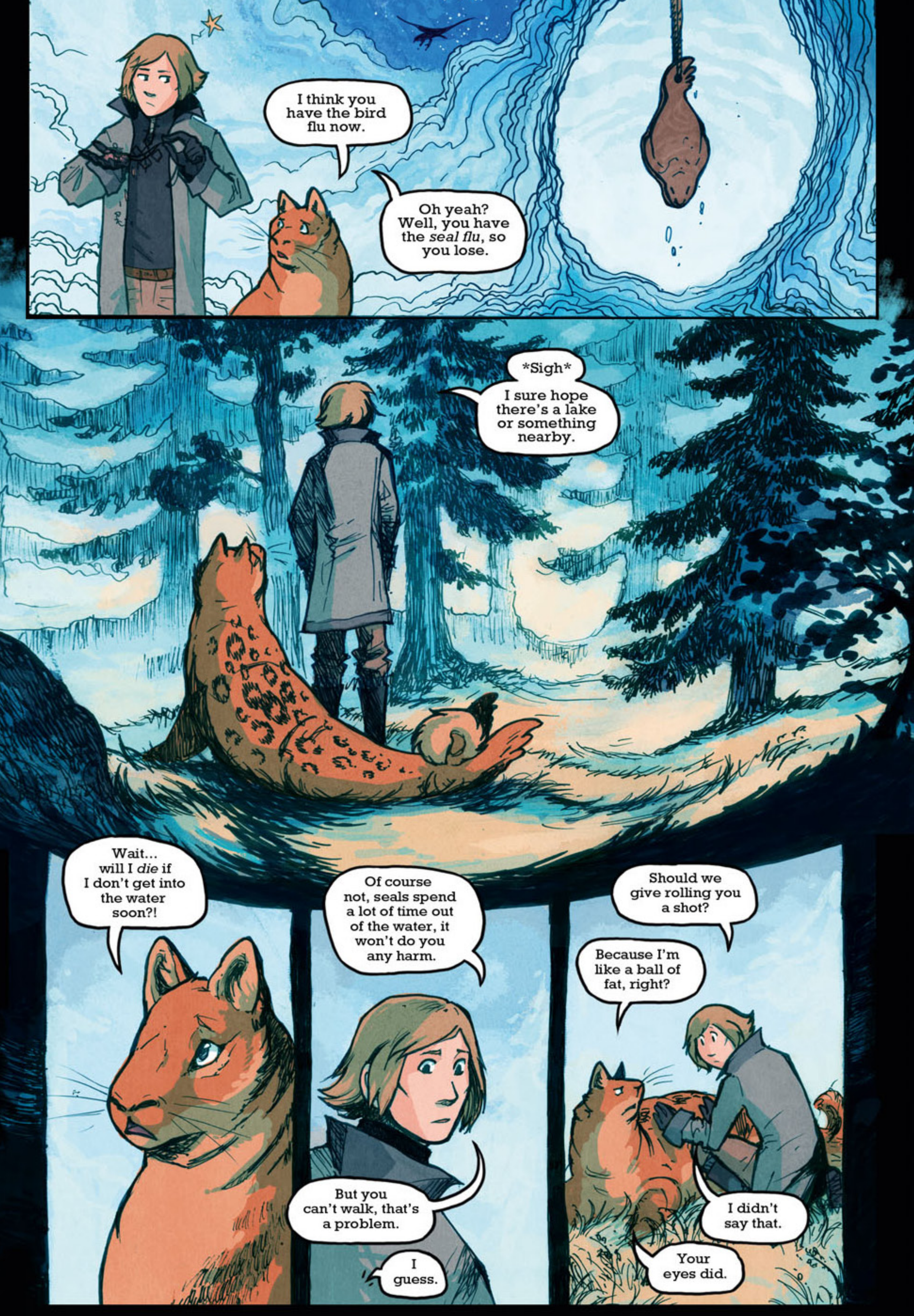


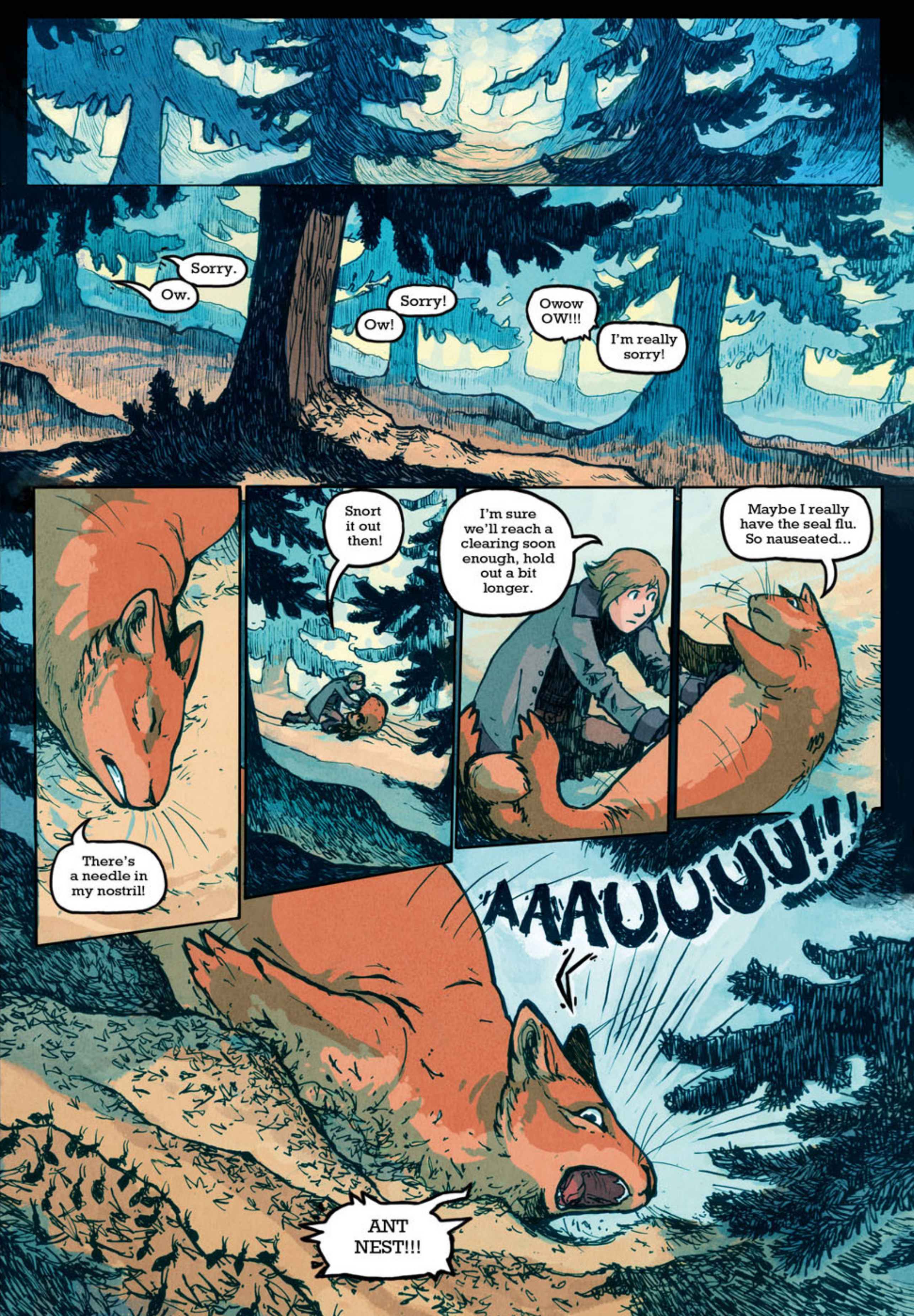
A Redtail's Dream

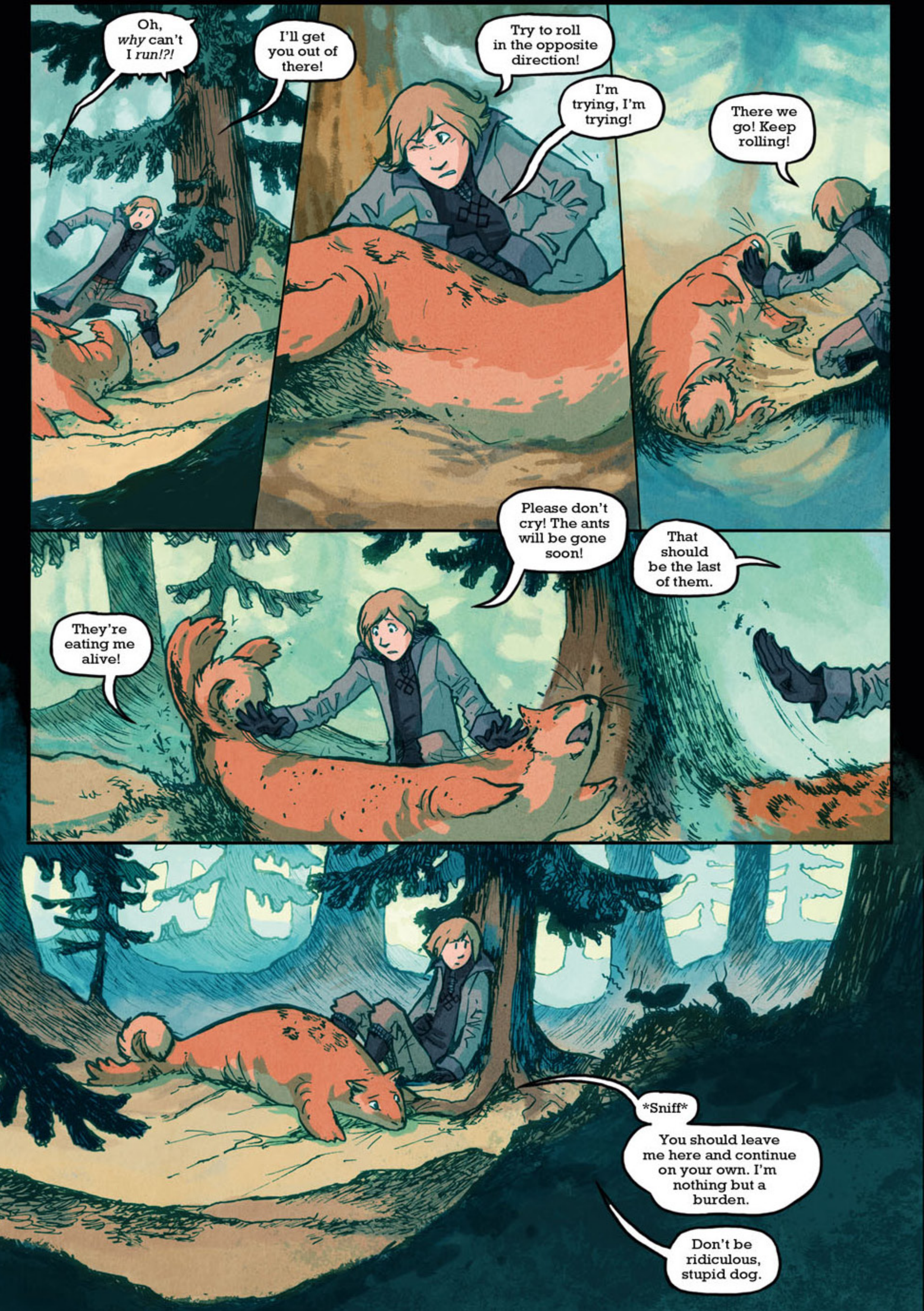
III

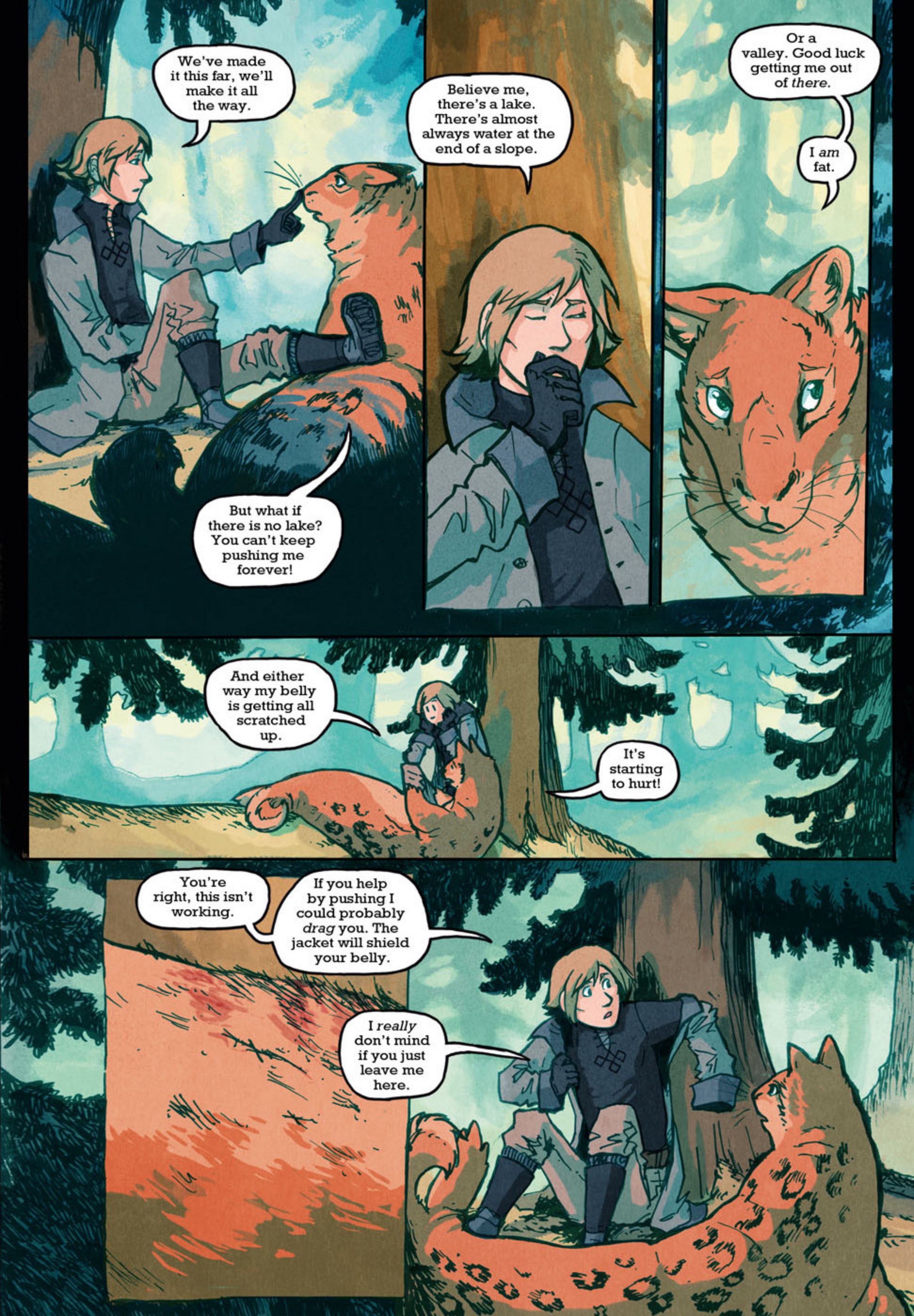

I'm *definitely* putting you on a diet once we get home.
There's no way even seals are supposed to be that heavy.
Oh *come on!*
My body only looks big because my paws are so tiny in comparison.
I don't care about your looks, you're adorable no matter how fat you get.
It's your *mass* that's the problem. It's breaking my back!
Seals are supposed to be heavy! I'm not overweight!
Are you sure? I've seen my share of chubby seals during my lifetime, and you must be the chubbiest yet!
Hellooo~! Well done, again! This is working like a *dream!* Maybe I should consider making mortals run all my errands in the future.
Just... not us, please?
Oh, don't you worry about that.
Time is so fleeting for your kind.
If I ever needed any assistance again, both of you would probably be sound asleep in Tuonela already.

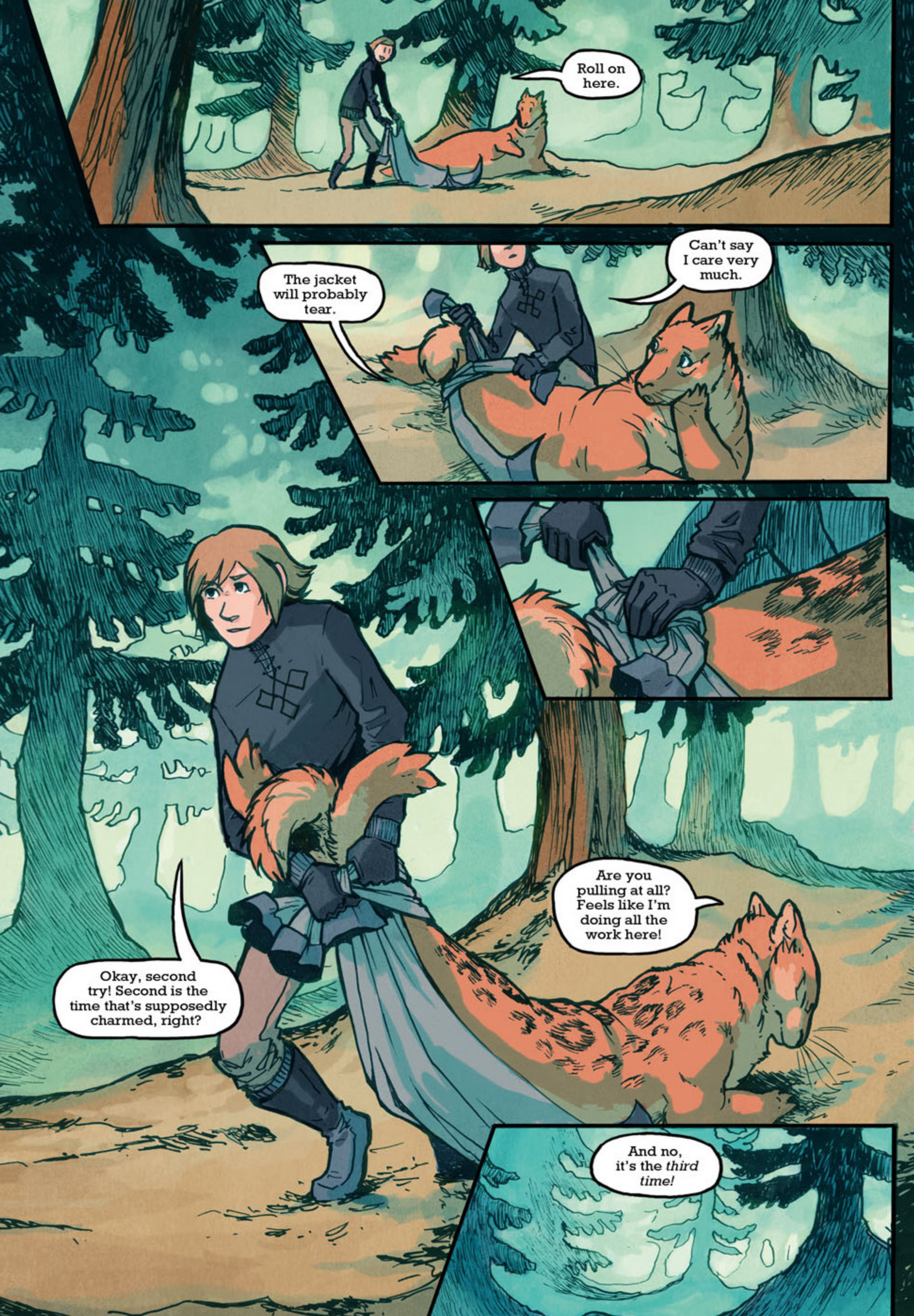

Yeaaah.. speaking of Tuonela:
You wouldn't happen to have any kind of protective spells laid upon us, would you?
Oh, hey! That would have been a *great* idea! But nope, none whatsoever.
So don't jump off any cliffs, okeydoke?
I told you we had no force field!
You're right. I was wrong.
It was silly of me to assume he would take care of anything.
Aaanyways, enough chit-chat! You have work to do, and I have a squirrel to distract.
Wait!
Can't you give us some protection *now?*
No can do, I still have no power to interfere with the dream world.
Ta-ta!
I *hate* that redtail.
At this point I'm just happy he hasn't pulled the plug on us.
And that we'll never see him again once this is over.
You've got something for me, or...?
BLURGH!

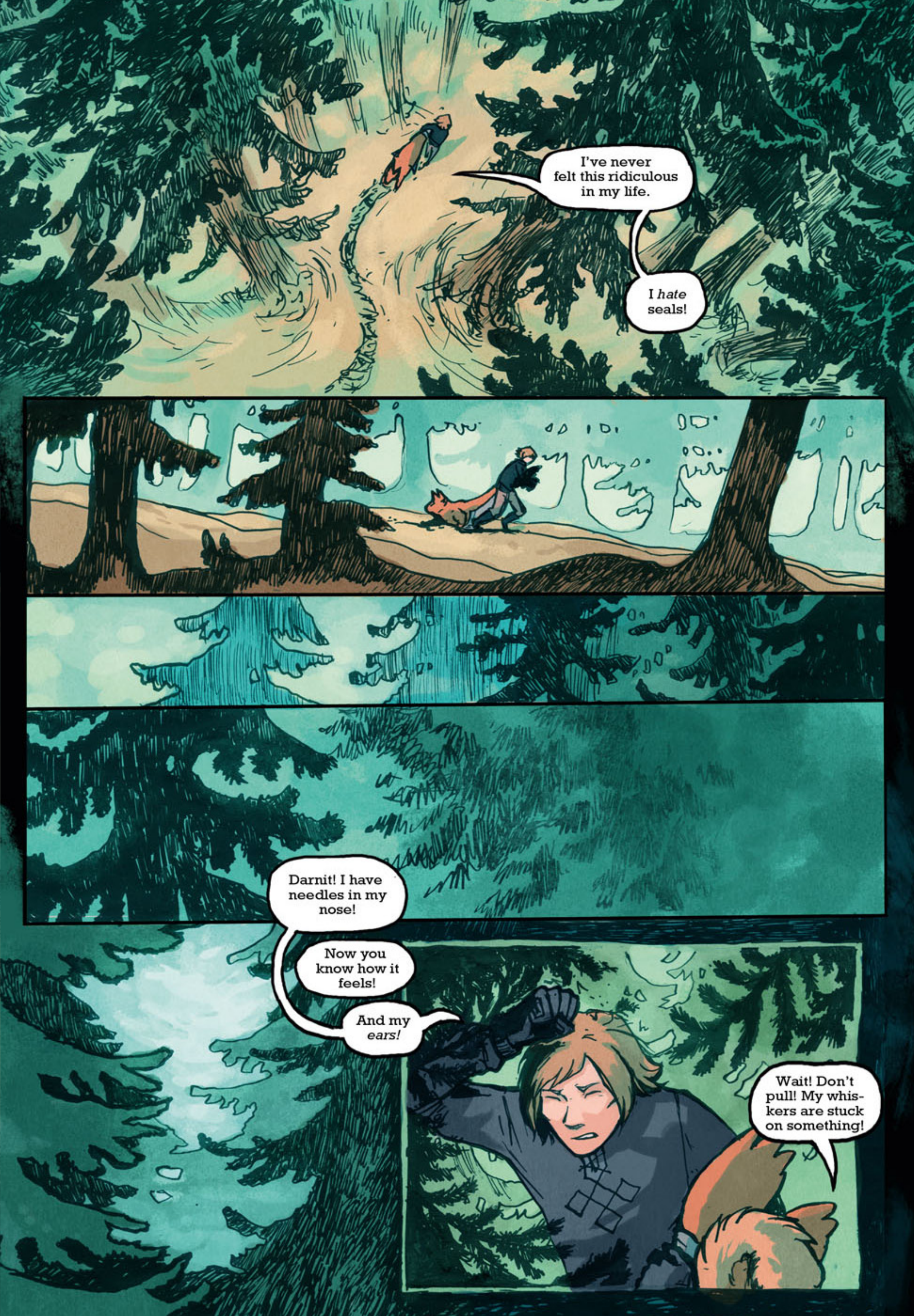

I think you have the bird flu now.
Oh yeah? Well, you have the *seal flu*, so you lose.
Sigh I sure hope there's a lake or something nearby.
Wait… will I *die* if I don't get into the water soon?!
Of course not, seals spend a lot of time out of the water, it won't do you any harm.
But you can't walk, that's a problem.
I guess.
Should we give rolling you a shot?
Because I'm like a ball of fat, right?
I didn't say that.
Your eyes did.

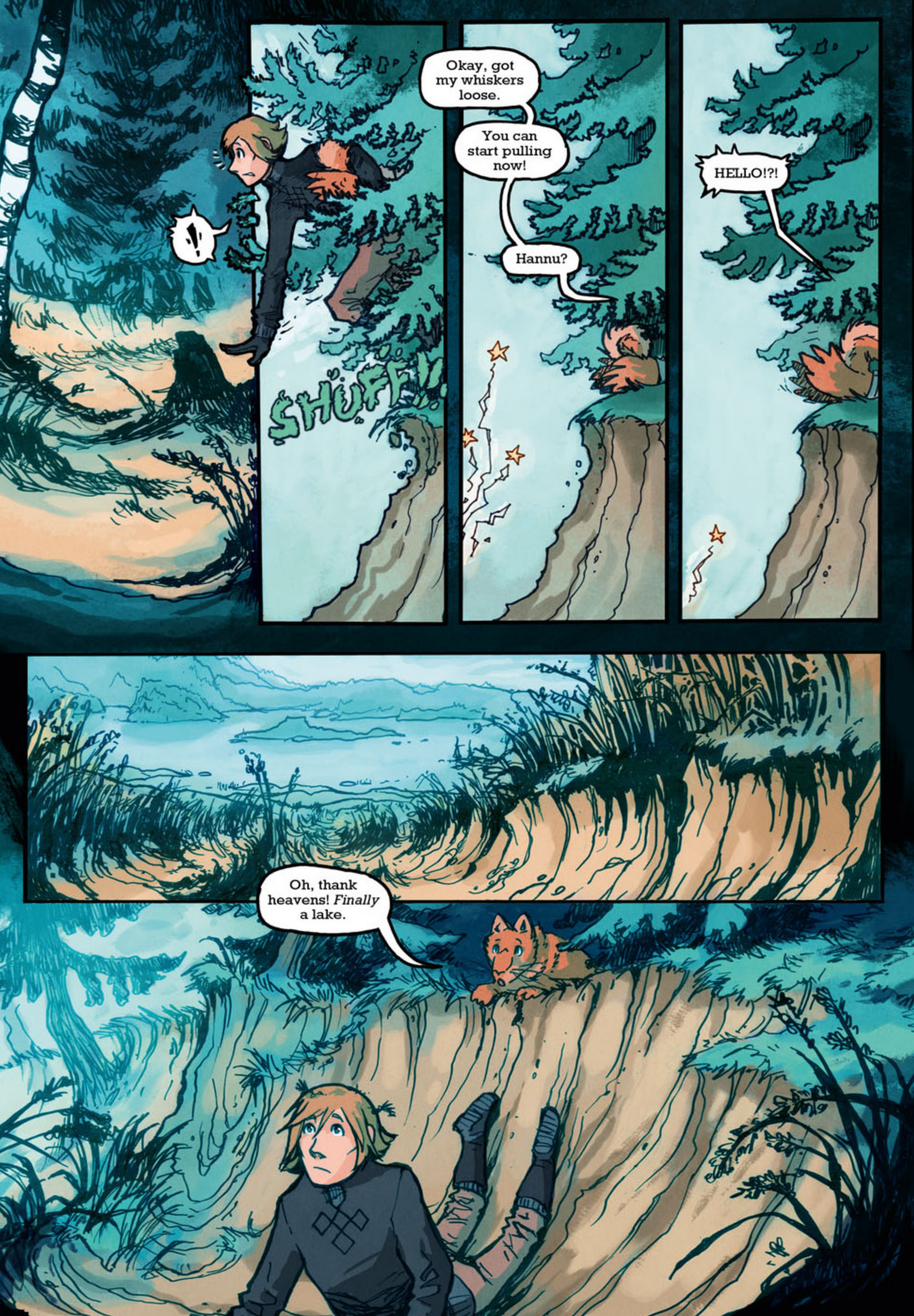

Sorry.
Ow.
Sorry!
Ow!
Owow OW!!!
I'm really sorry!
There's a needle in my nostril!
Snort it out then!
I'm sure we'll reach a clearing soon enough, hold out a bit longer.
Maybe I really have the seal flu. So nauseated...
AAAUUUUU!!!
ANT NEST!!!

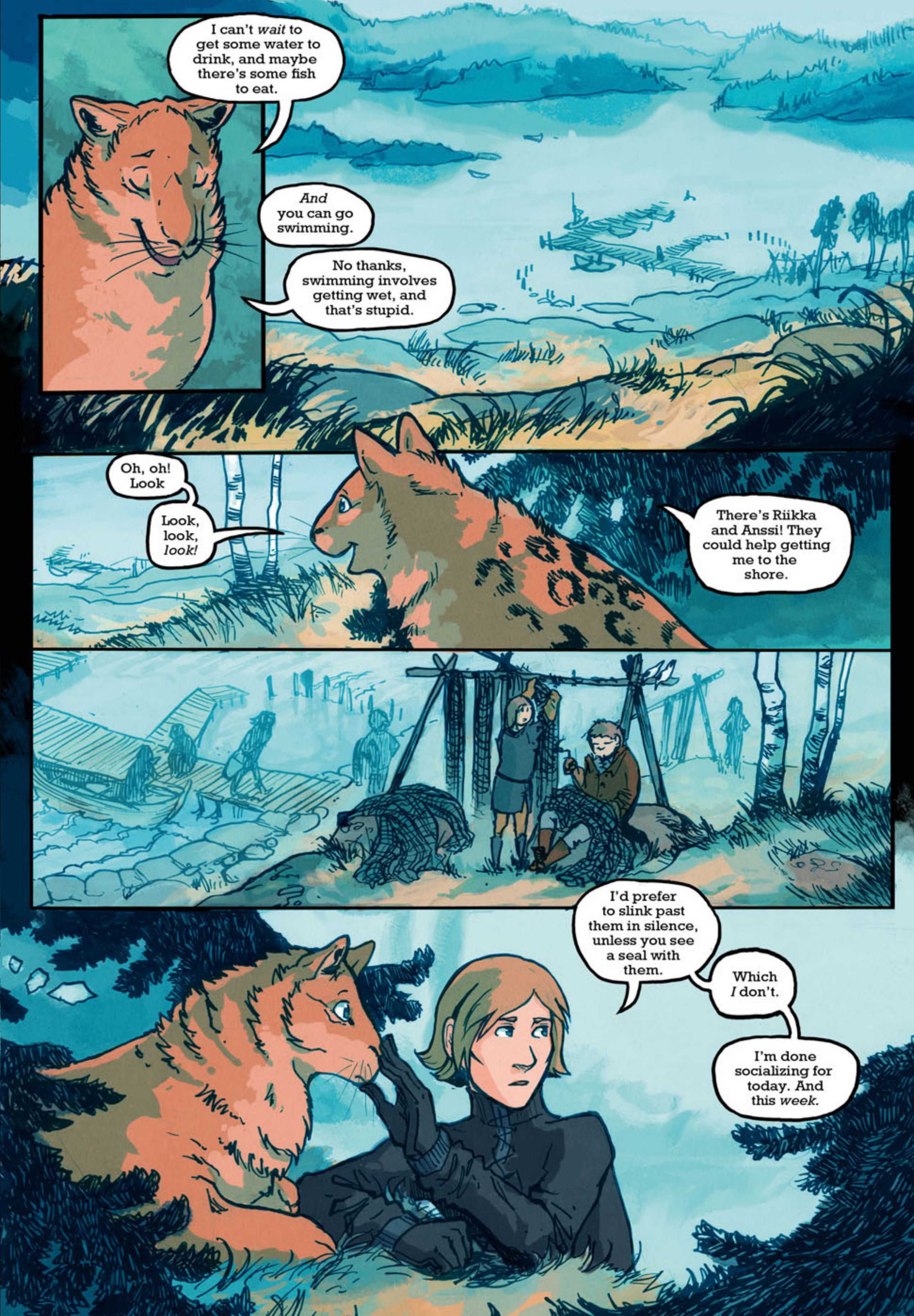

Oh, *why* can't I *run!?!*
I'll get you out of there!
Try to roll in the opposite direction!
I'm trying, I'm trying!
There we go! Keep rolling!
They're eating me alive!
Please don't cry! The ants will be gone soon!
That should be the last of them.
Sniff
You should leave me here and continue on your own. I'm nothing but a burden.
Don't be ridiculous, stupid dog.

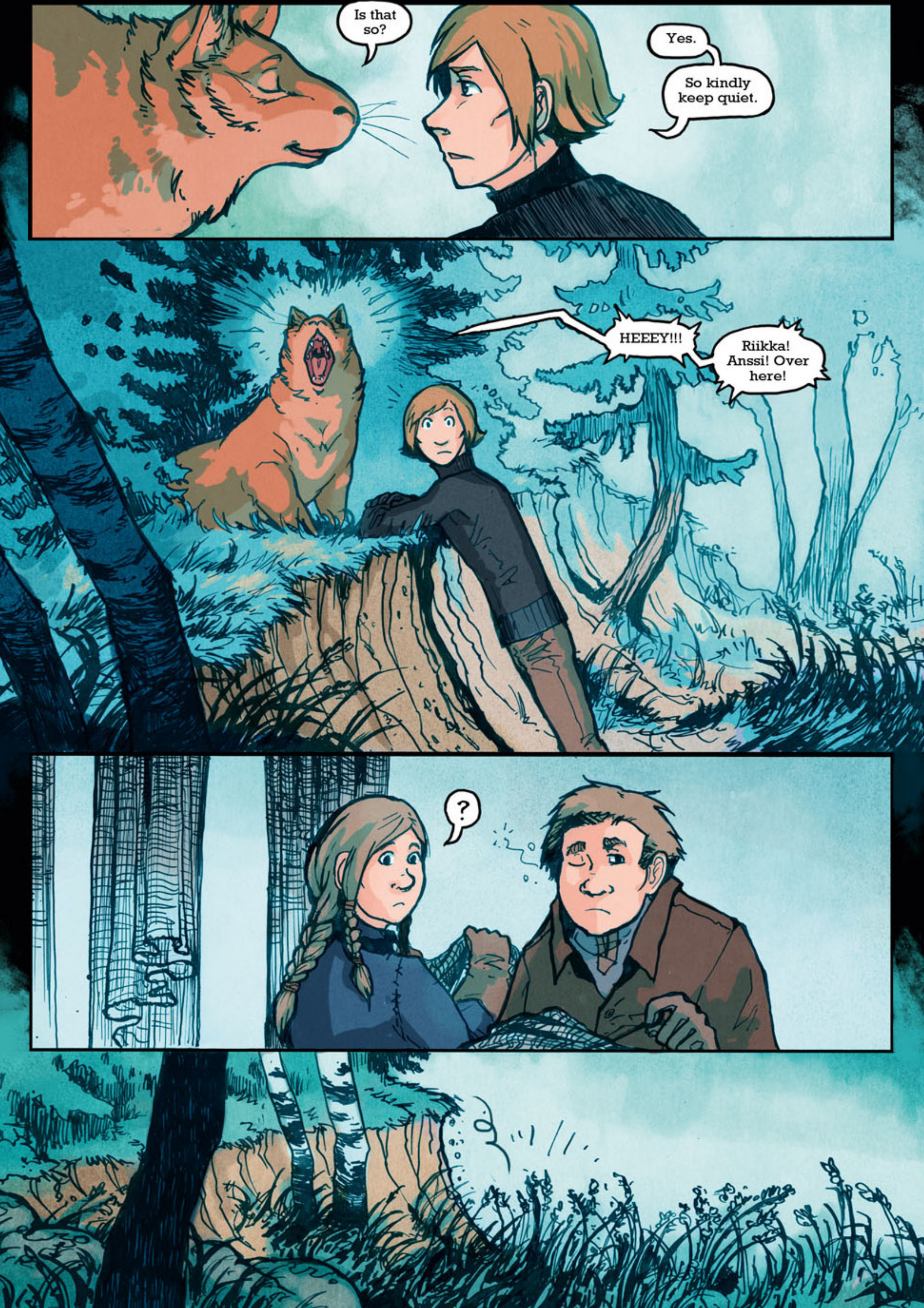

We've made it this far, we'll make it all the way.
But what if there is no lake? You can't keep pushing me forever!
Believe me, there's a lake. There's almost always water at the end of a slope.
Or a valley. Good luck getting me out of *there*.
I *am* fat.
And either way my belly is getting all scratched up.
It's starting to hurt!
You're right, this isn't working.
If you help by pushing I could probably *drag* you. The jacket will shield your belly.
I *really* don't mind if you just leave me here.

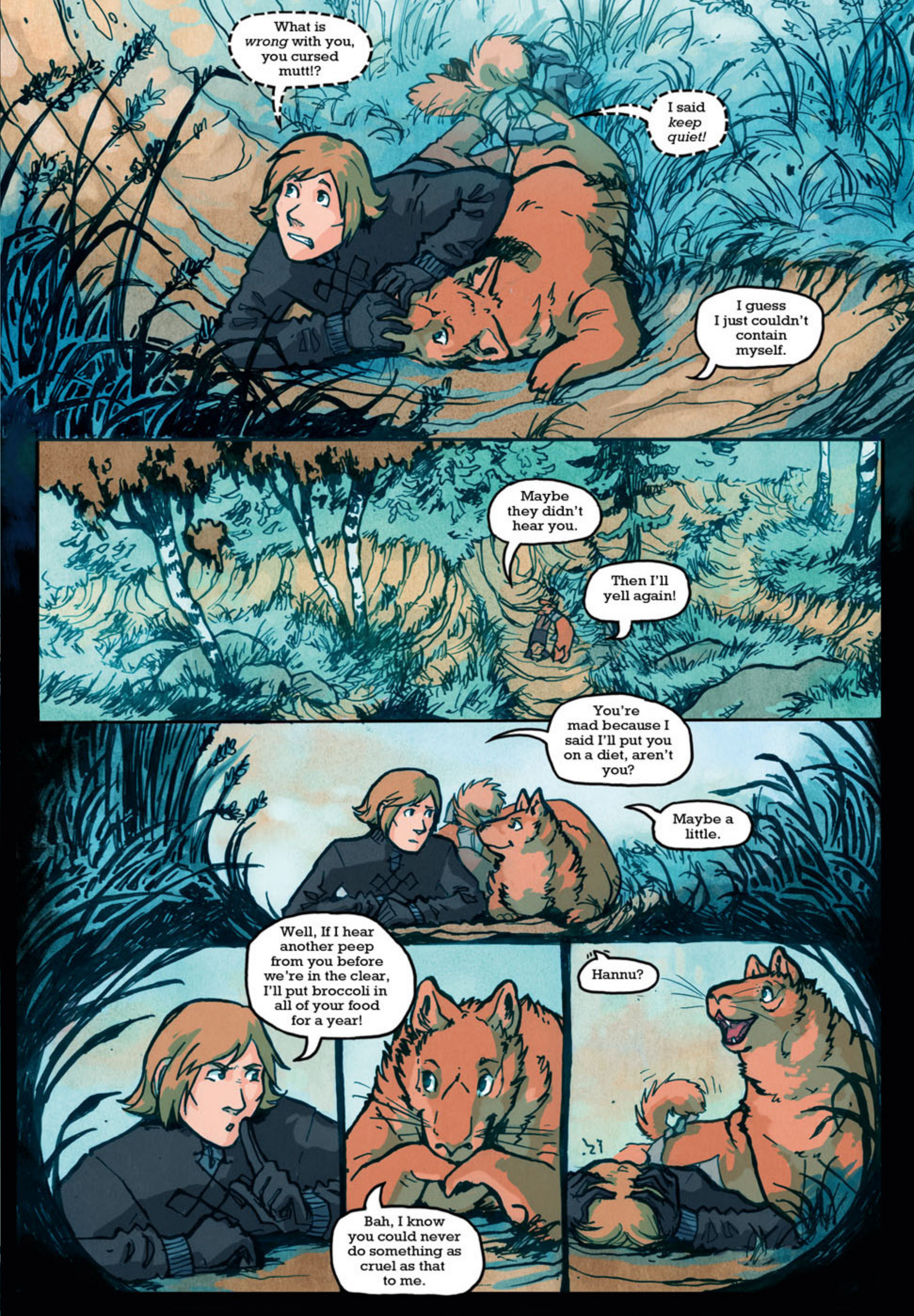

Roll on here.
The jacket will probably tear.
Can't say I care very much.
Okay, second try! Second is the time that's supposedly charmed, right?
Are you pulling at all? Feels like I'm doing all the work here!
And no, it's the *third time!*

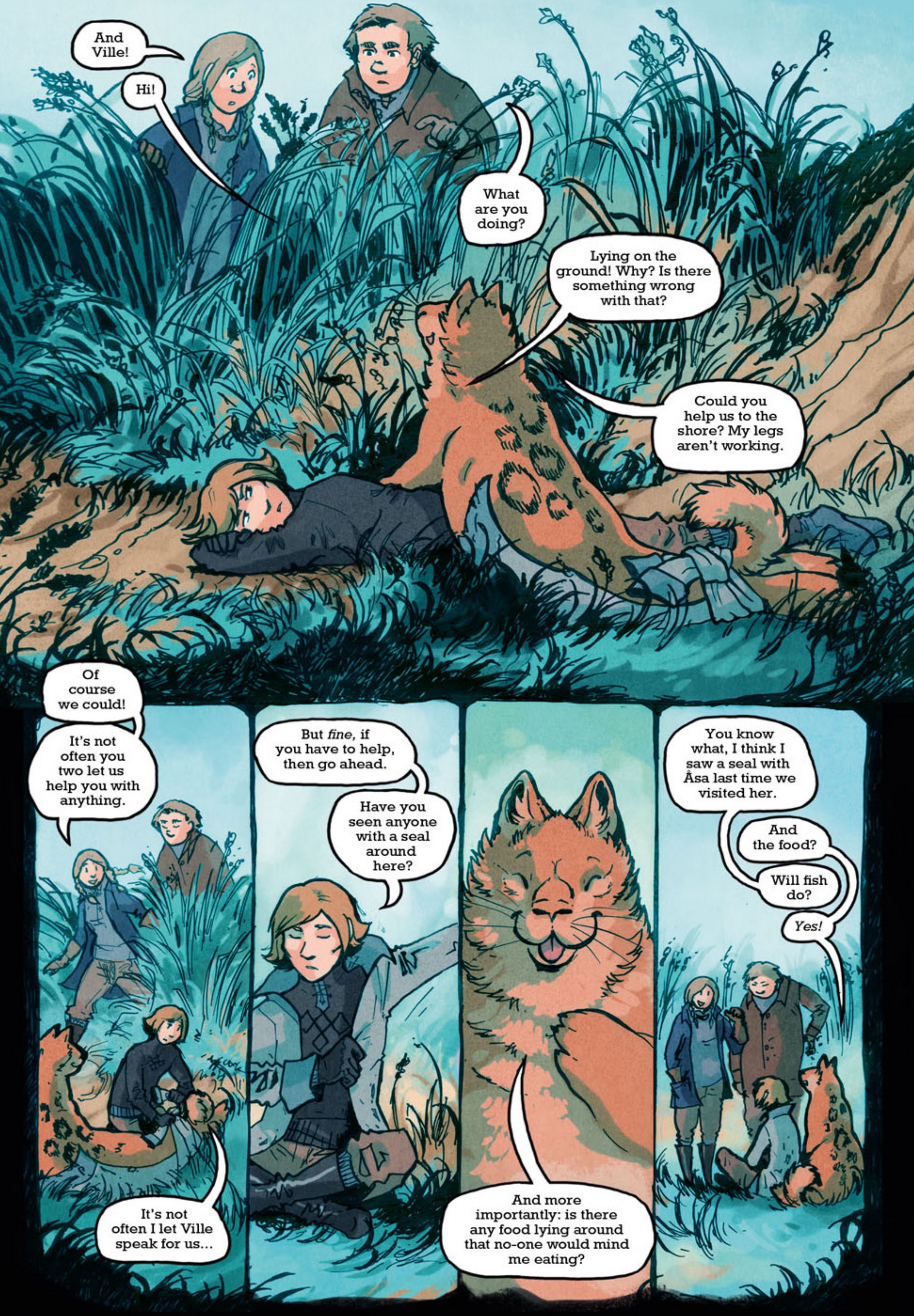

I've never felt this ridiculous in my life.
I *hate* seals!
Darnit! I have needles in my nose!
Now you know how it feels!
And my *ears!*
Wait! Don't pull! My whiskers are stuck on something!

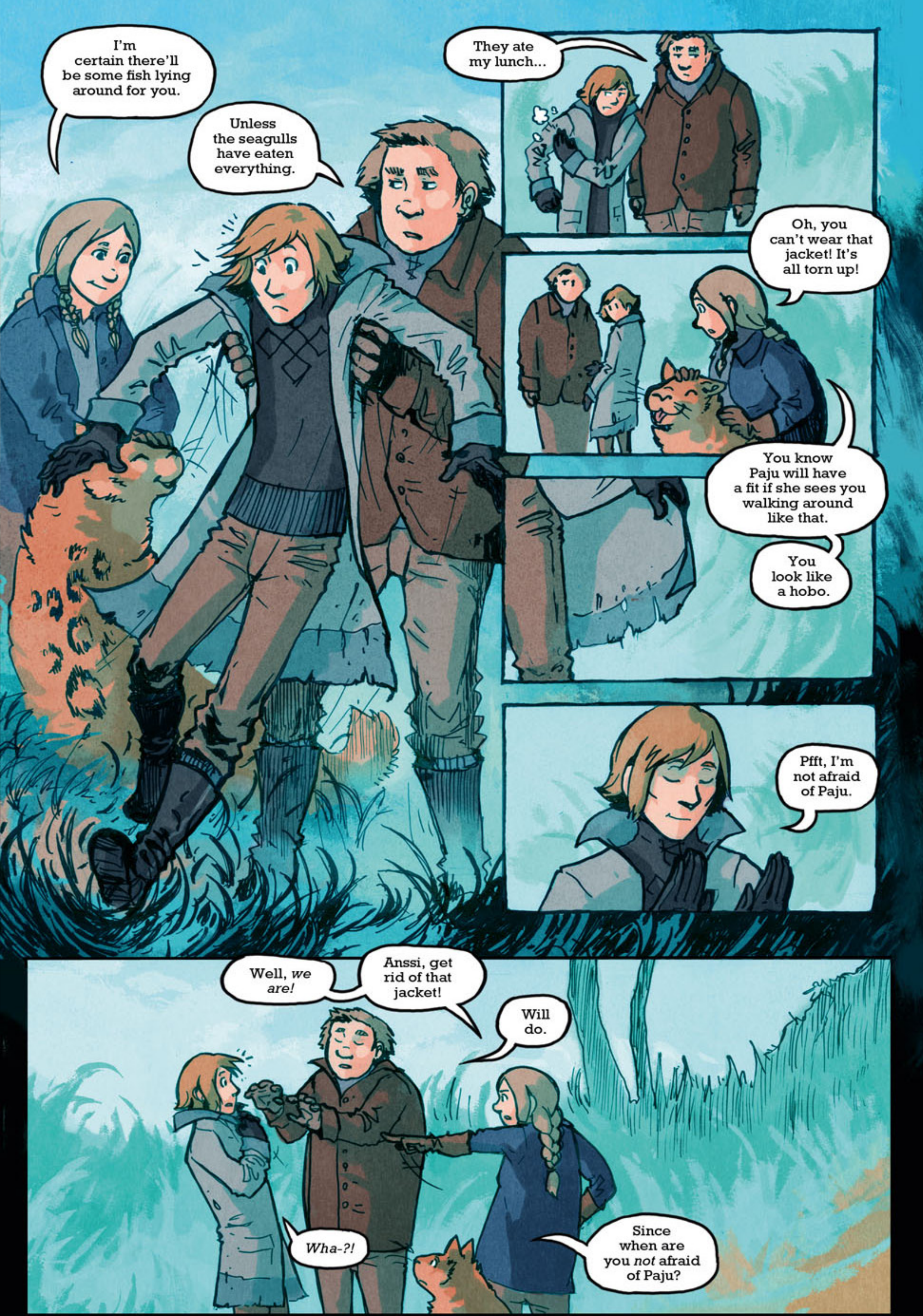

!
SHUFF!!
Okay, got my whiskers loose.
You can start pulling now!
Hannu?
HELLO!?!
Oh, thank heavens! *Finally* a lake.

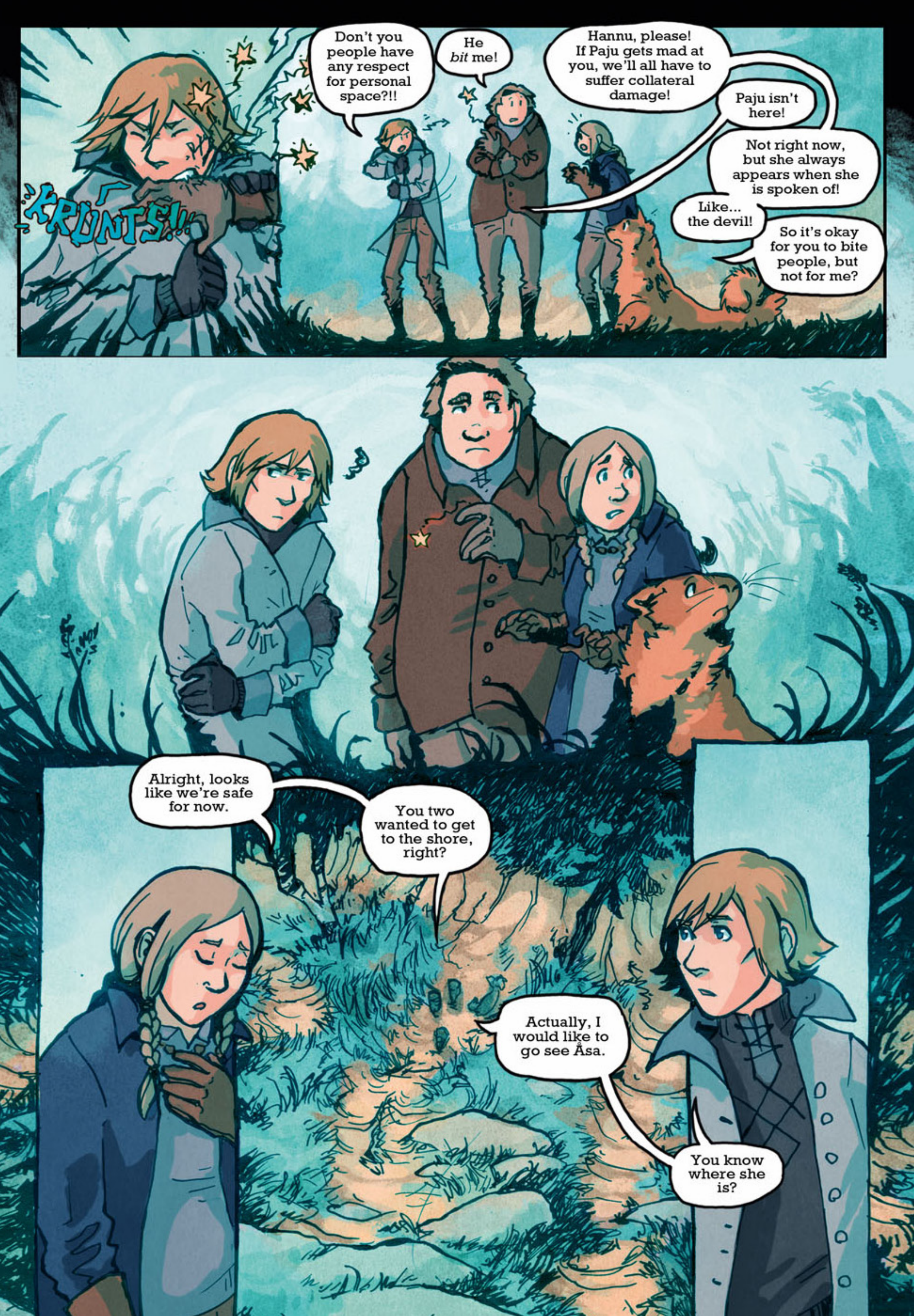

I can't *wait* to get some water to drink, and maybe there's some fish to eat.
And you can go swimming.
No thanks, swimming involves getting wet, and that's stupid.
Oh, oh! Look
Look, look, *look!*
There's Riikka and Anssi! They could help getting me to the shore.
I'd prefer to slink past them in silence, unless you see a seal with them.
Which *I* don't.
I'm done socializing for today. And this *week.*

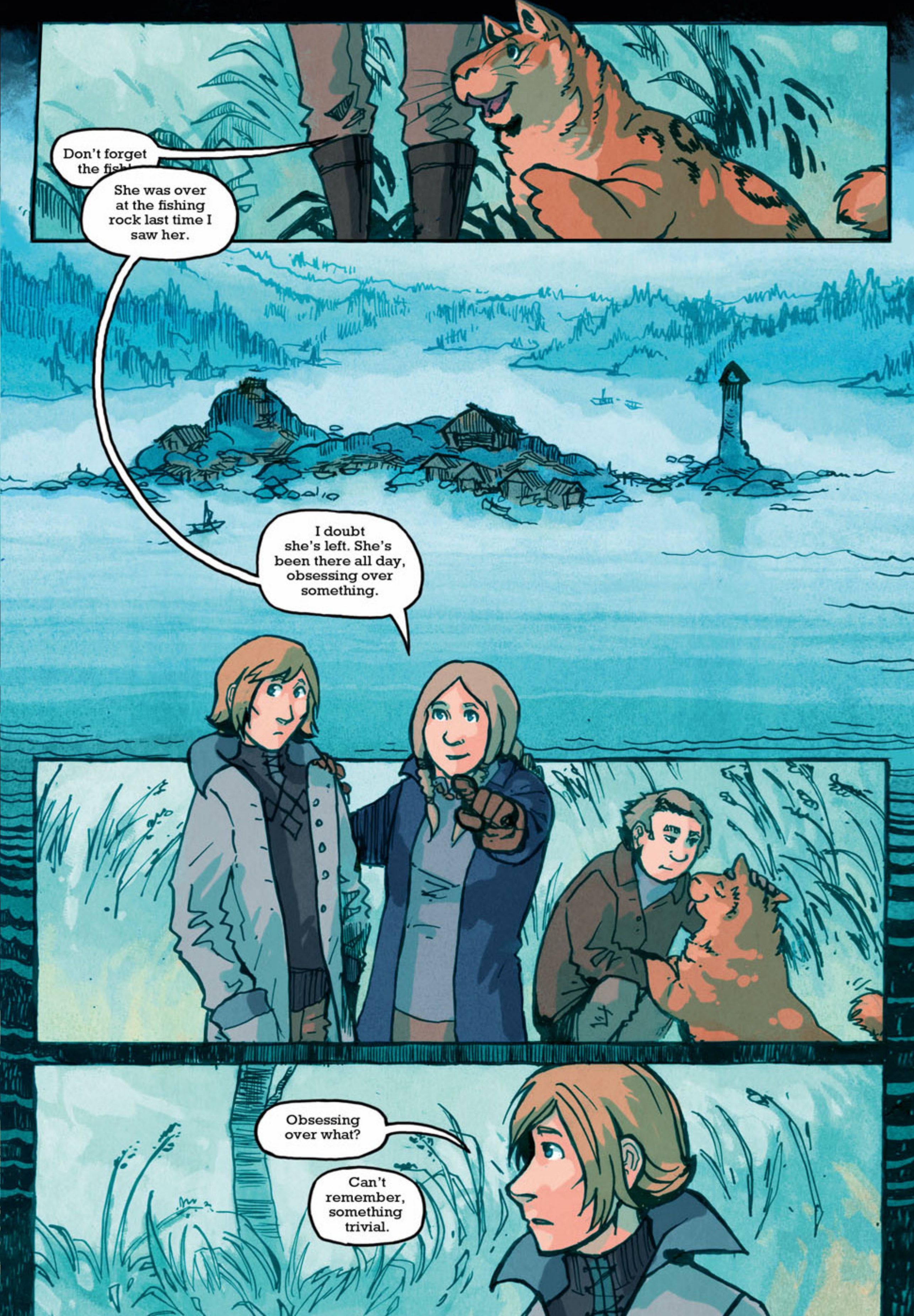

Is that so?
Yes.
So kindly keep quiet.
HEEEY!!!
Riikka! Anssi! Over here!
?

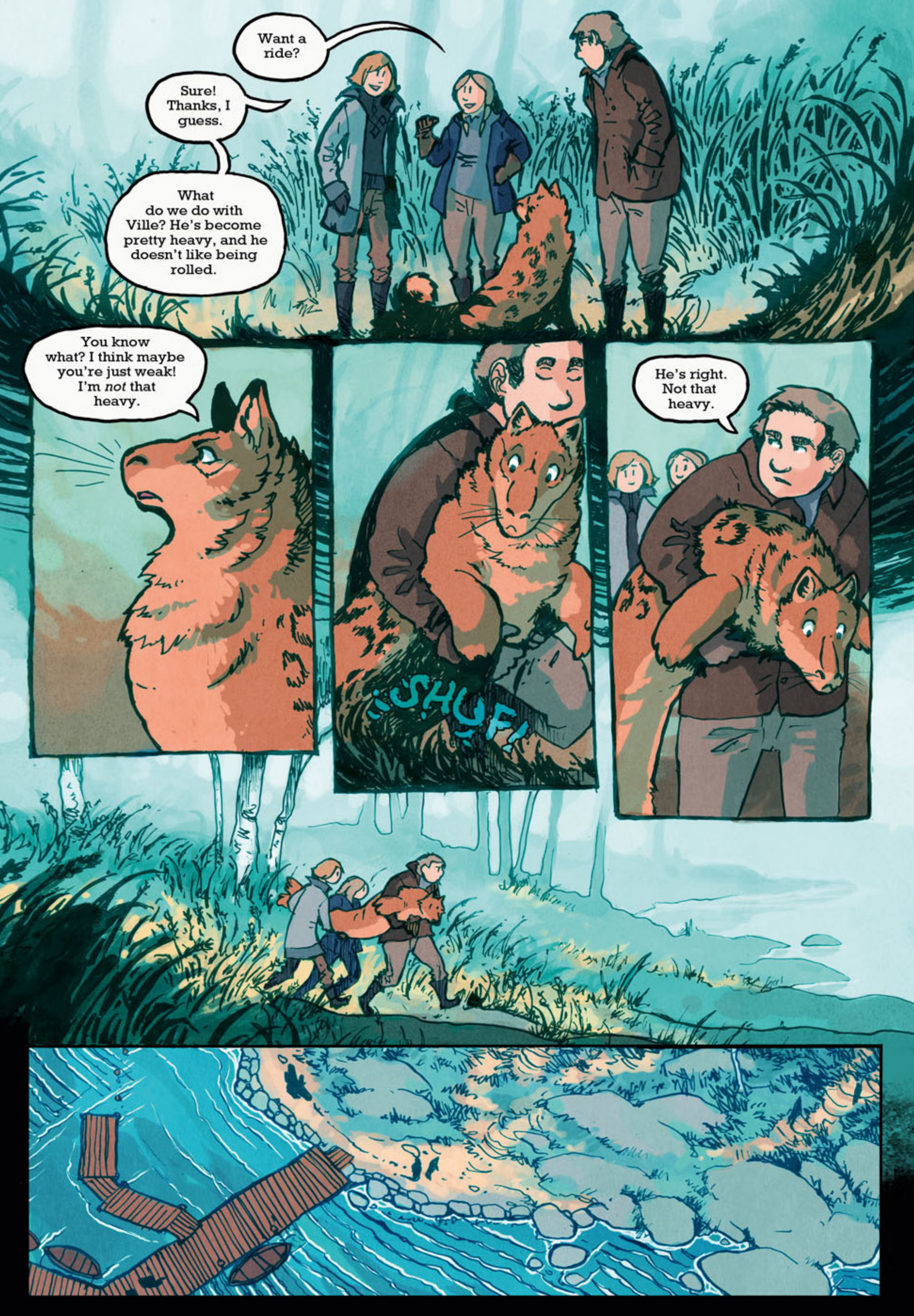

What is *wrong* with you, you cursed mutt!?
I said *keep quiet!*
I guess I just couldn't contain myself.
Maybe they didn't hear you.
Then I'll yell again!
You're mad because I said I'll put you on a diet, aren't you?
Maybe a little.
Well, If I hear another peep from you before we're in the clear, I'll put broccoli in all of your food for a year!
Bah, I know you could never do something as cruel as that to me.
Hannu?

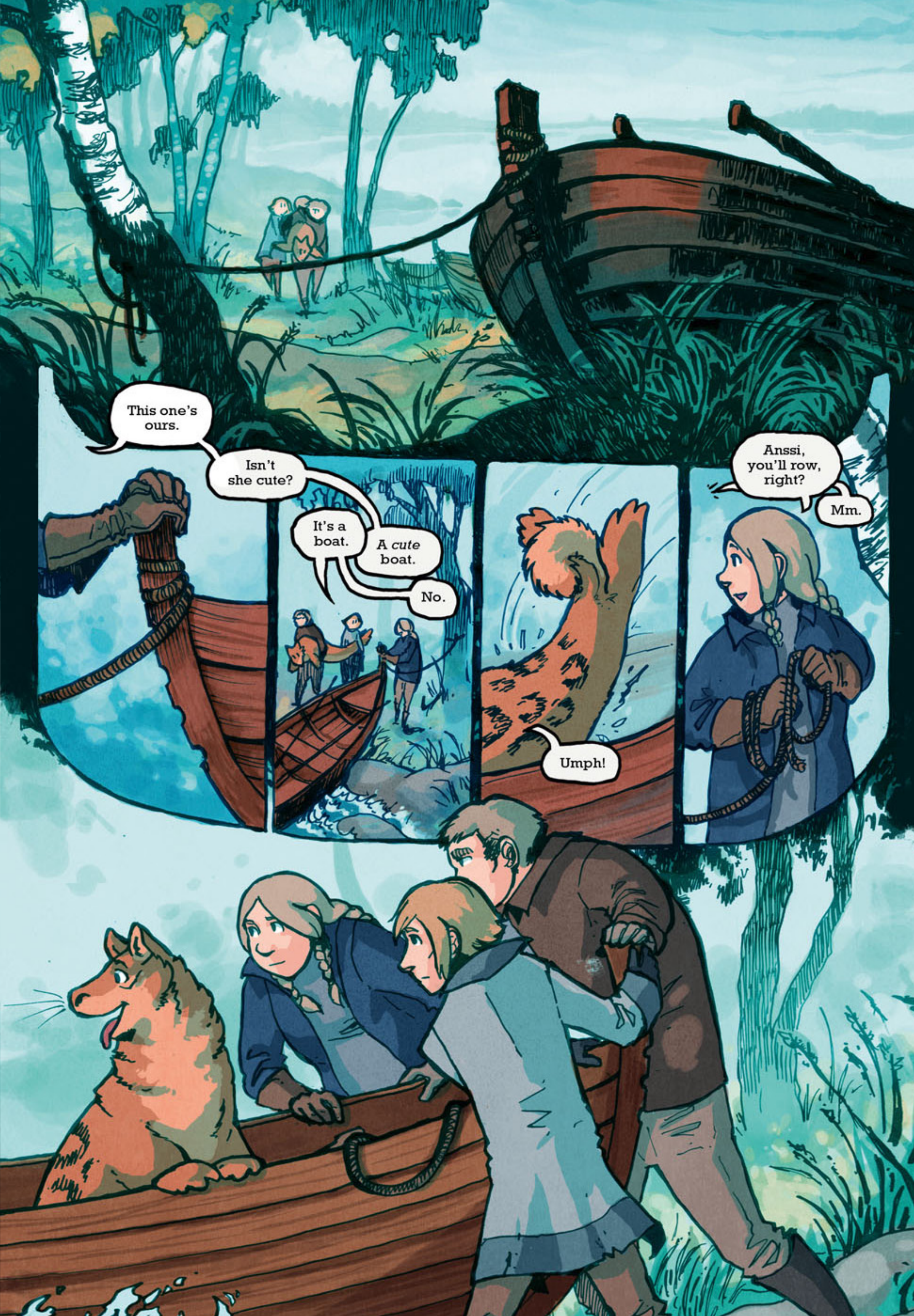

And Ville!
Hi!
What are you doing?
Lying on the ground! Why? Is there something wrong with that?
Could you help us to the shore? My legs aren't working.
Of course we could!
It's not often you two let us help you with anything.
It's not often I let Ville speak for us…
But *fine,* if you have to help, then go ahead.
Have you seen anyone with a seal around here?
And more importantly: is there any food lying around that no-one would mind me eating?
You know what, I think I saw a seal with Åsa last time we visited her.
And the food?
Will fish do?
Yes!

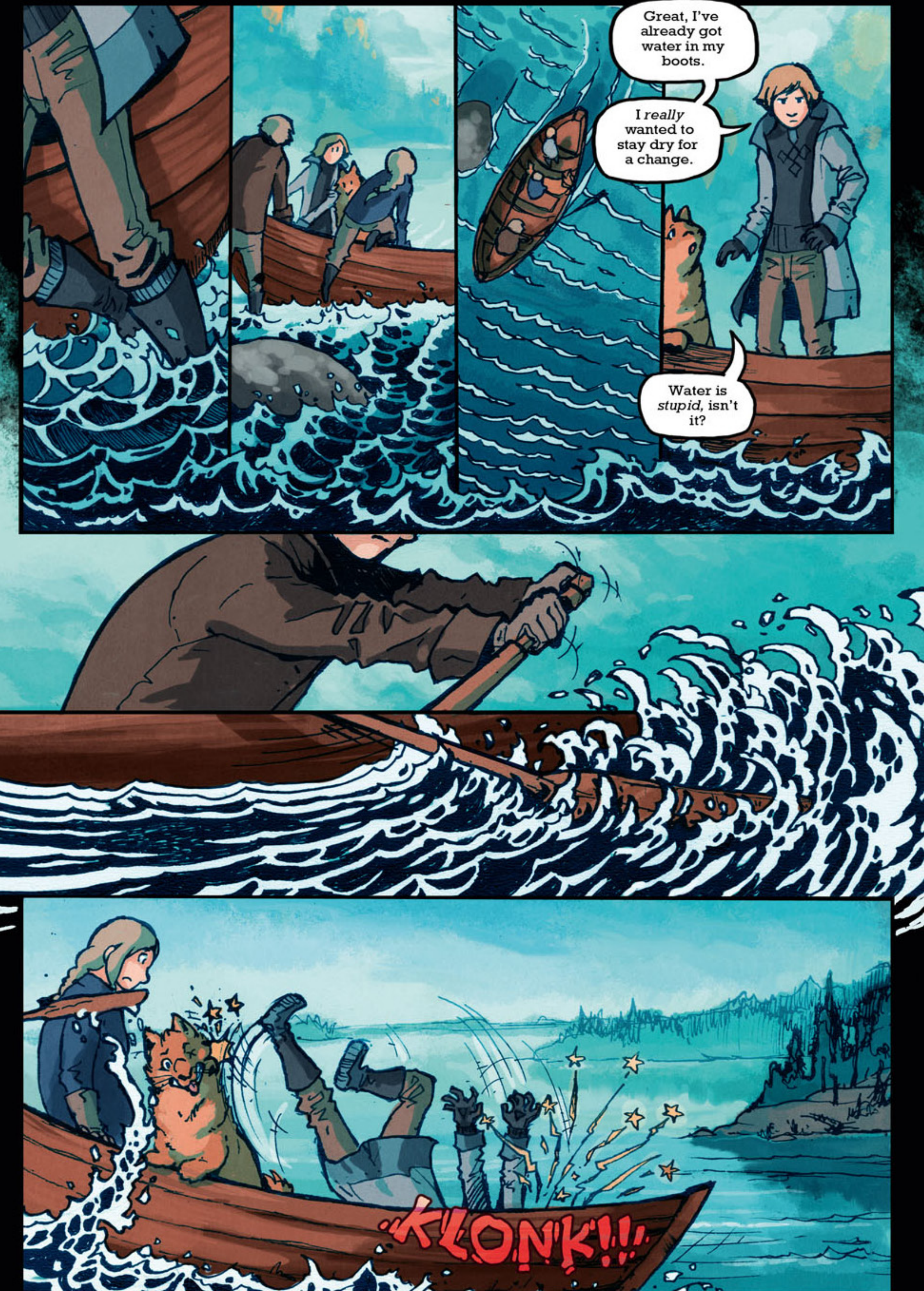

I'm certain there'll be some fish lying around for you.
Unless the seagulls have eaten everything.
They ate my lunch...
Oh, you can't wear that jacket! It's all torn up!
You know Paju will have a fit if she sees you walking around like that.
You look like a hobo.
Pfft, I'm not afraid of Paju.
Well, *we* are!
Anssi, get rid of that jacket!
Will do.
Wha-?!
Since when are you *not* afraid of Paju?

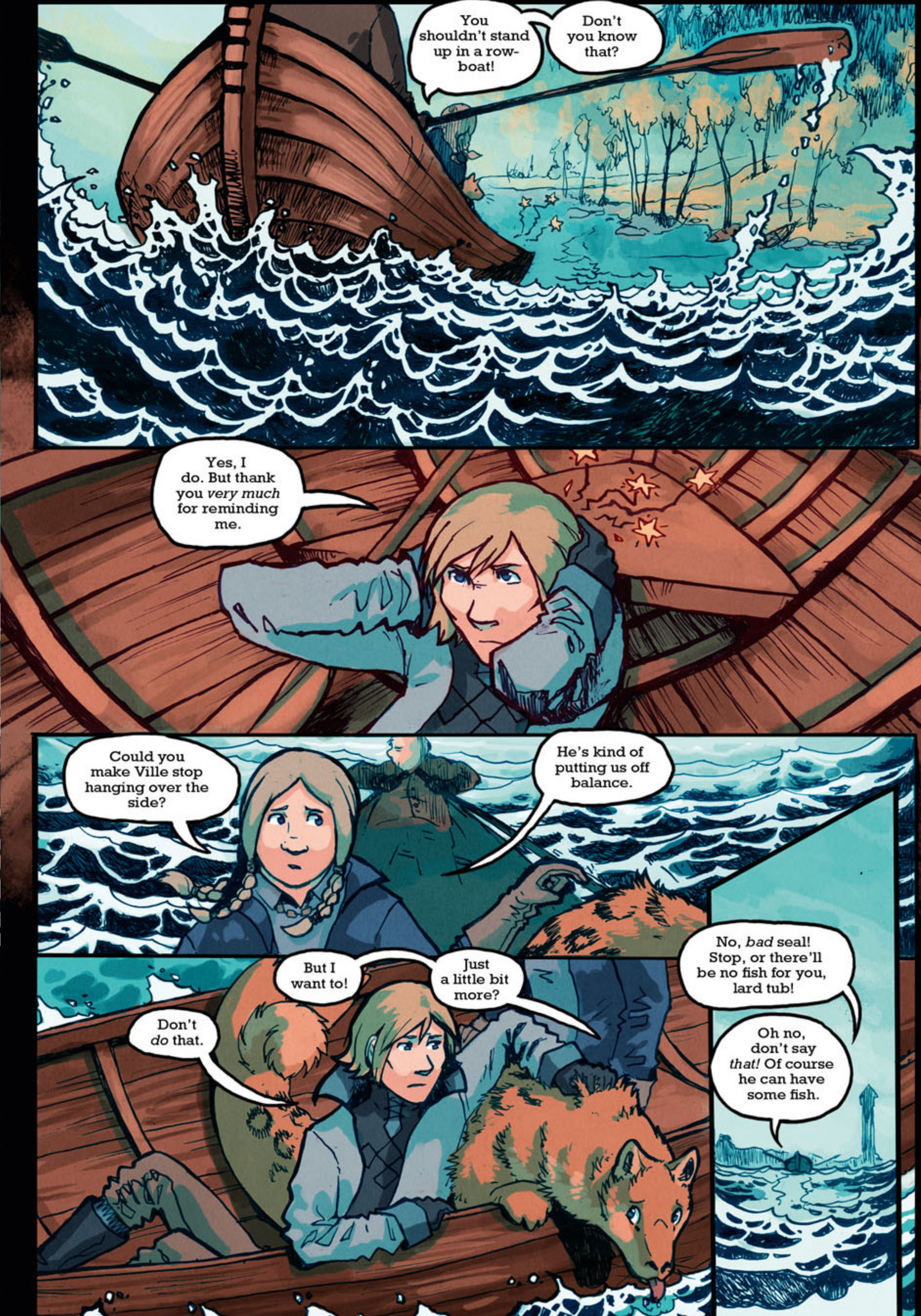

KRUNTS!!!
Don't you people have any respect for personal space?!!
He *bit* me!
Hannu, please! If Paju gets mad at you, we'll all have to suffer collateral damage!
Paju isn't here!
Not right now, but she always appears when she is spoken of!
Like... the devil!
So it's okay for you to bite people, but not for me?
Alright, looks like we're safe for now.
You two wanted to get to the shore, right?
Actually, I would like to go see Åsa.
You know where she is?

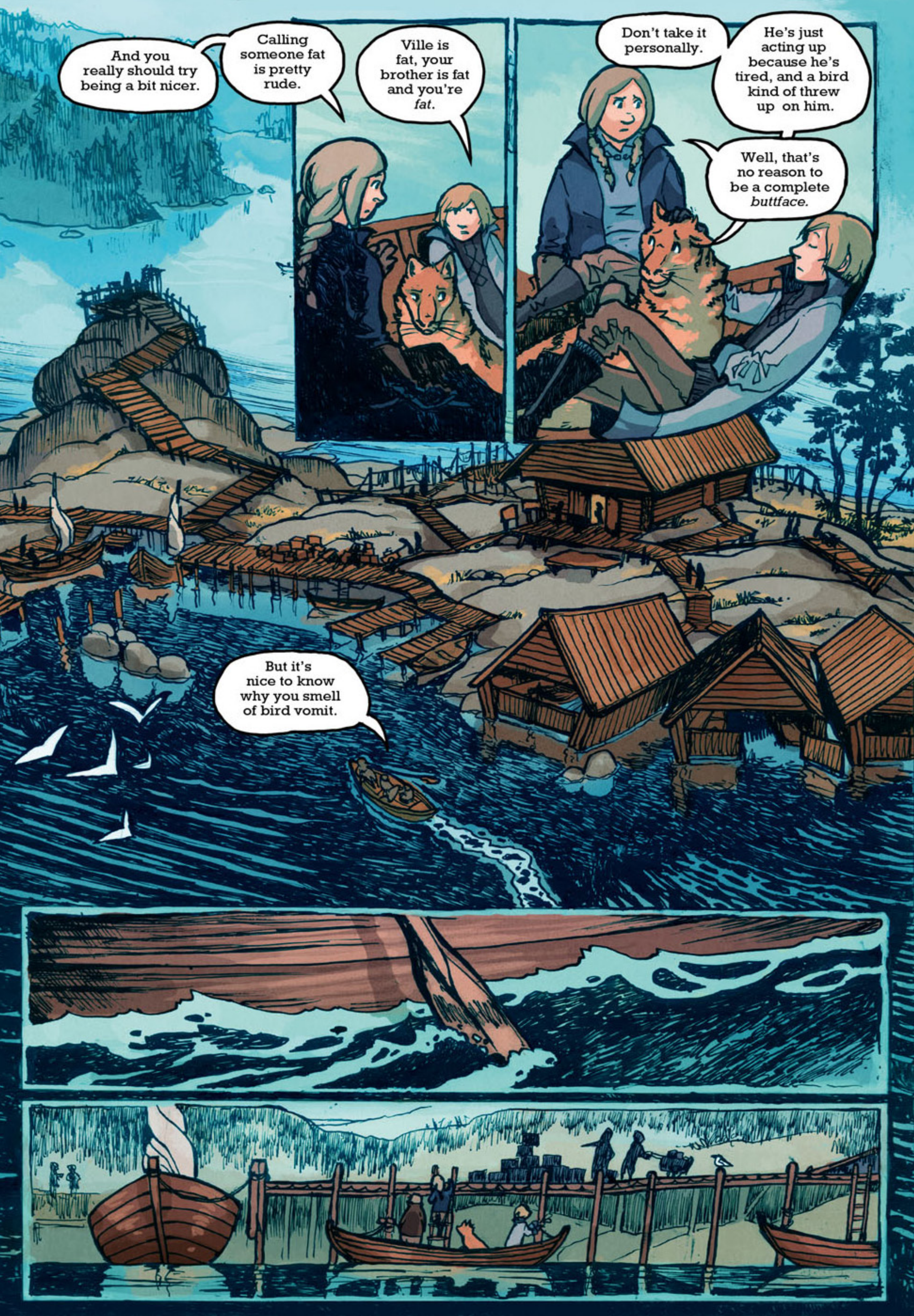

Don't forget the fish
She was over at the fishing rock last time I saw her.
I doubt she's left. She's been there all day, obsessing over something.
Obsessing over what?
Can't remember, something trivial.

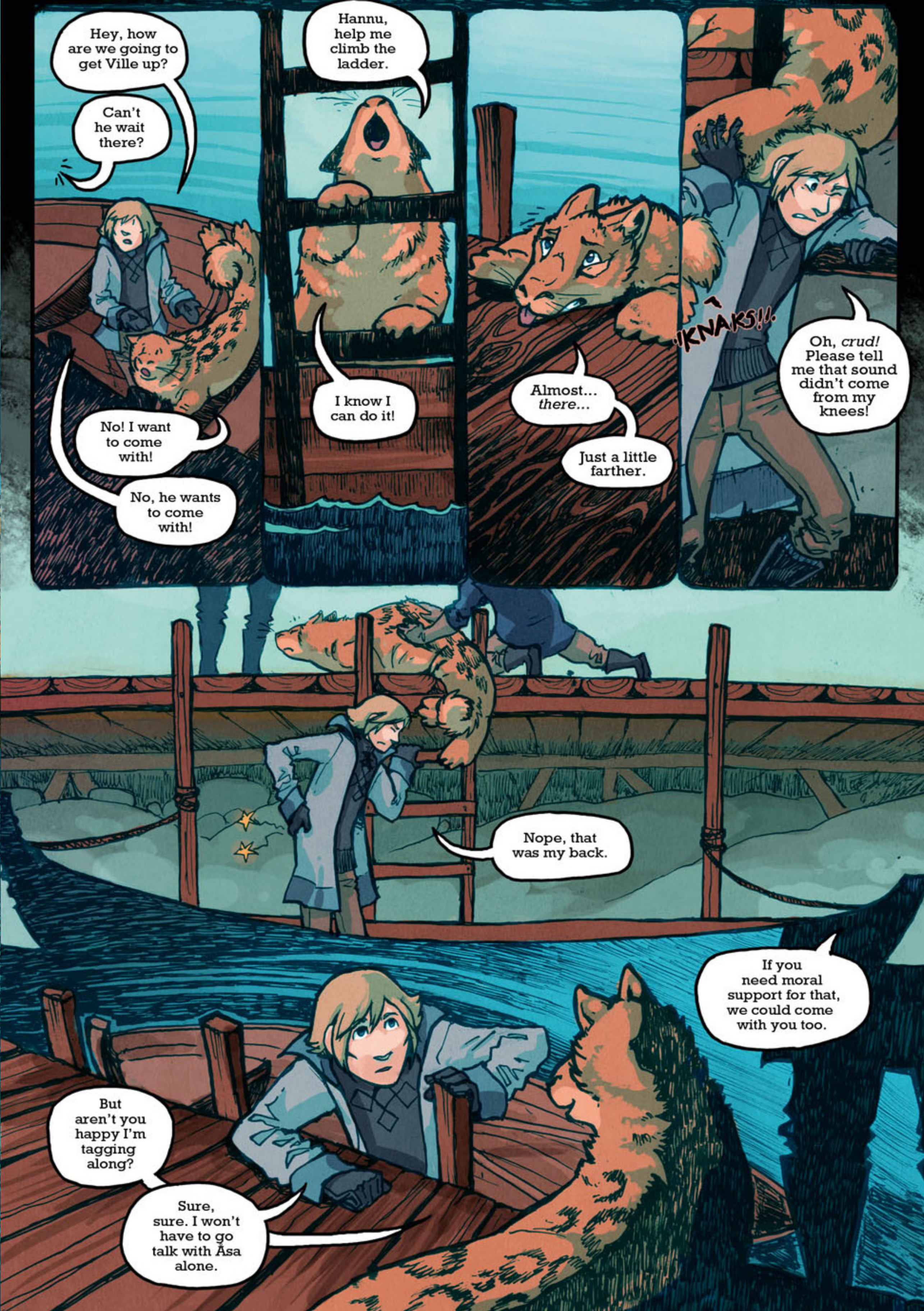

Want a ride?
Sure! Thanks, I guess.
What do we do with Ville? He's become pretty heavy, and he doesn't like being rolled.
You know what? I think maybe you're just weak! I'm *not* that heavy.
SHUF!
He's right. Not that heavy.

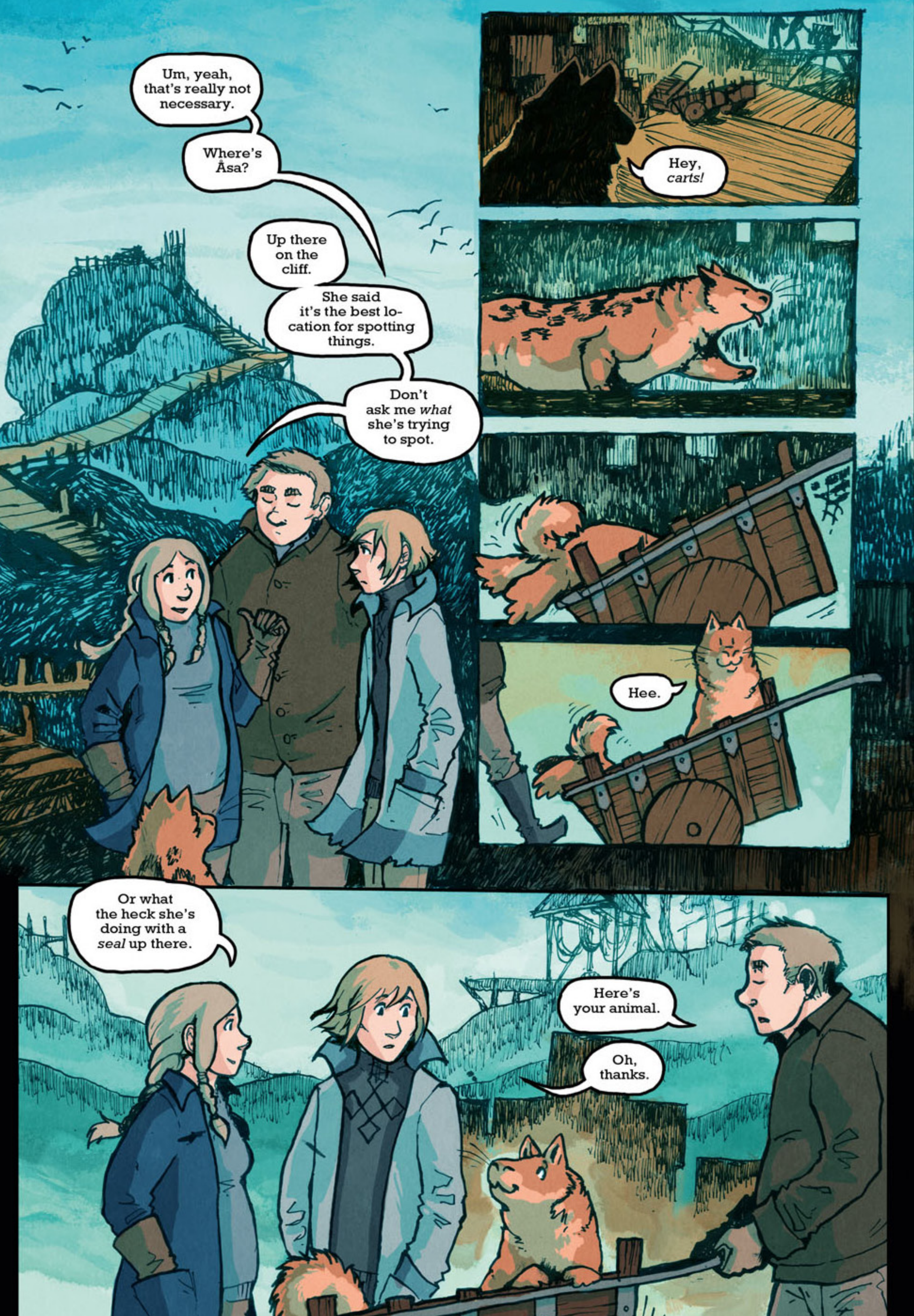

This one's ours.
Isn't she cute?
It's a boat.
A *cute* boat.
No.
Umph!
Anssi, you'll row, right?
Mm.

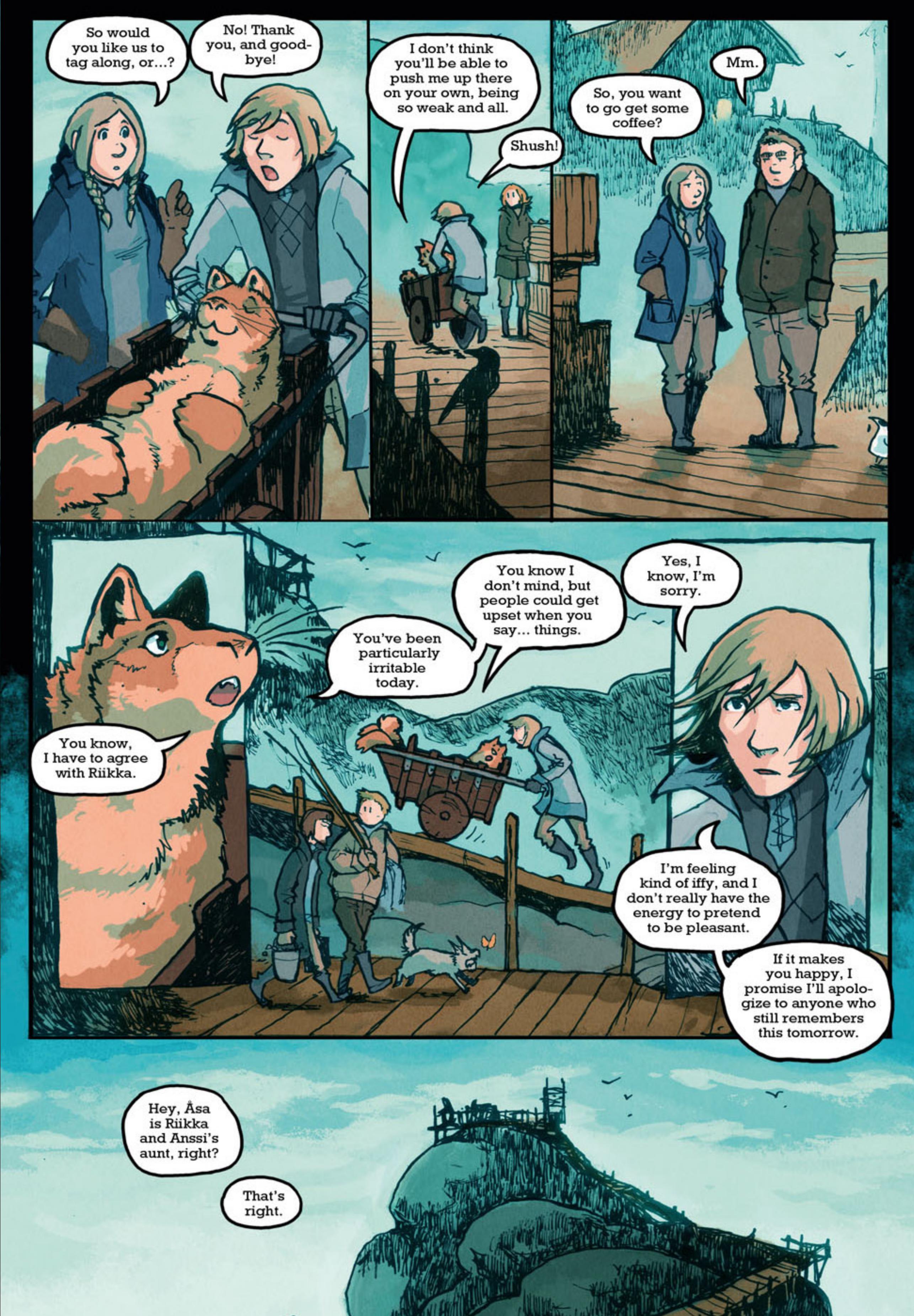

Great, I've already got water in my boots.
I *really* wanted to stay dry for a change.
Water is *stupid,* isn't it?
KLONK!!!

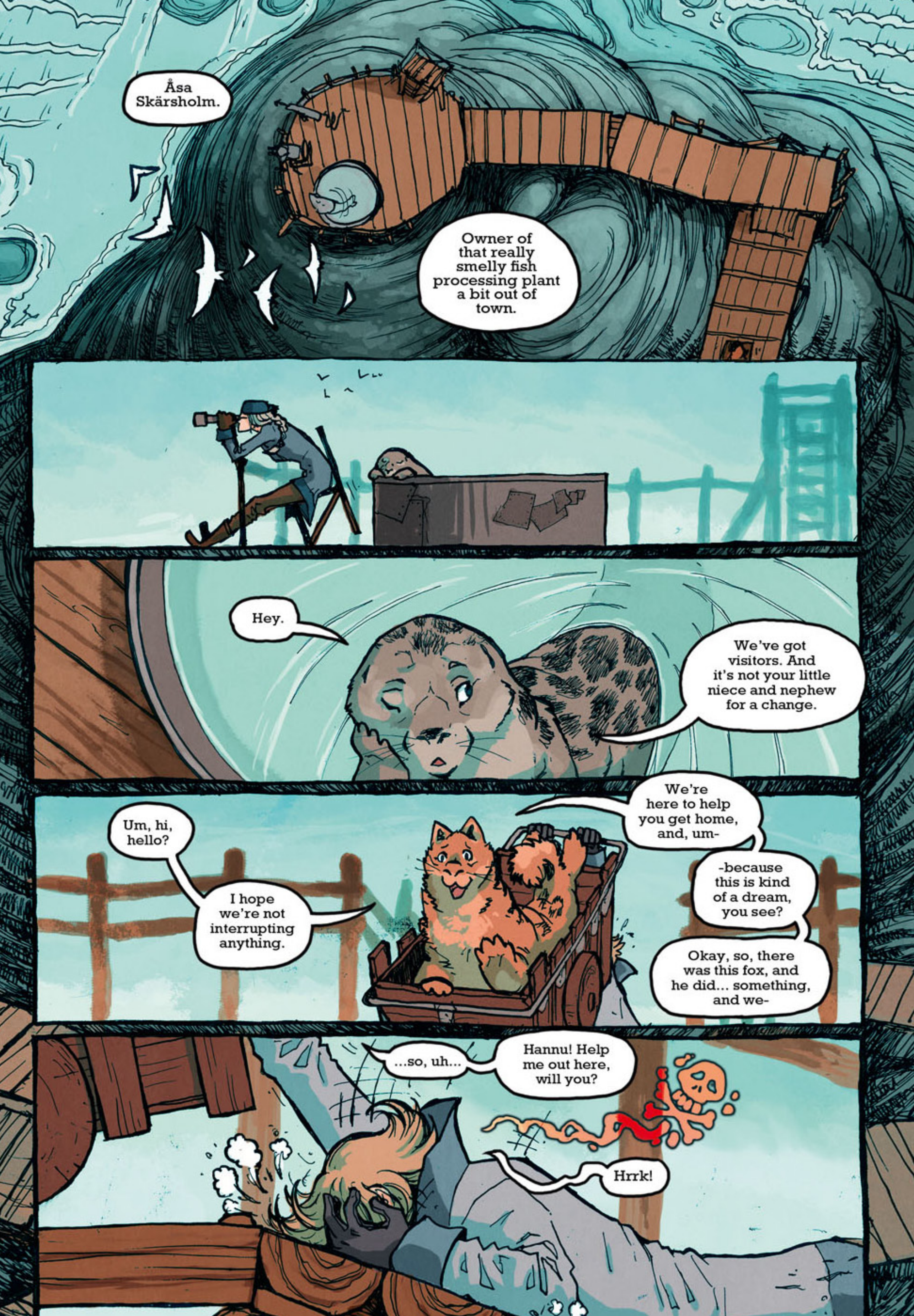

You shouldn't stand up in a row-boat!
Don't you know that?
Yes, I do. But thank you *very much* for reminding me.
Could you make Ville stop hanging over the side?
He's kind of putting us off balance.
But I want to!
Just a little bit more?
Don't *do* that.
No, *bad* seal! Stop, or there'll be no fish for you, lard tub!
Oh no, don't say *that!* Of course he can have some fish.

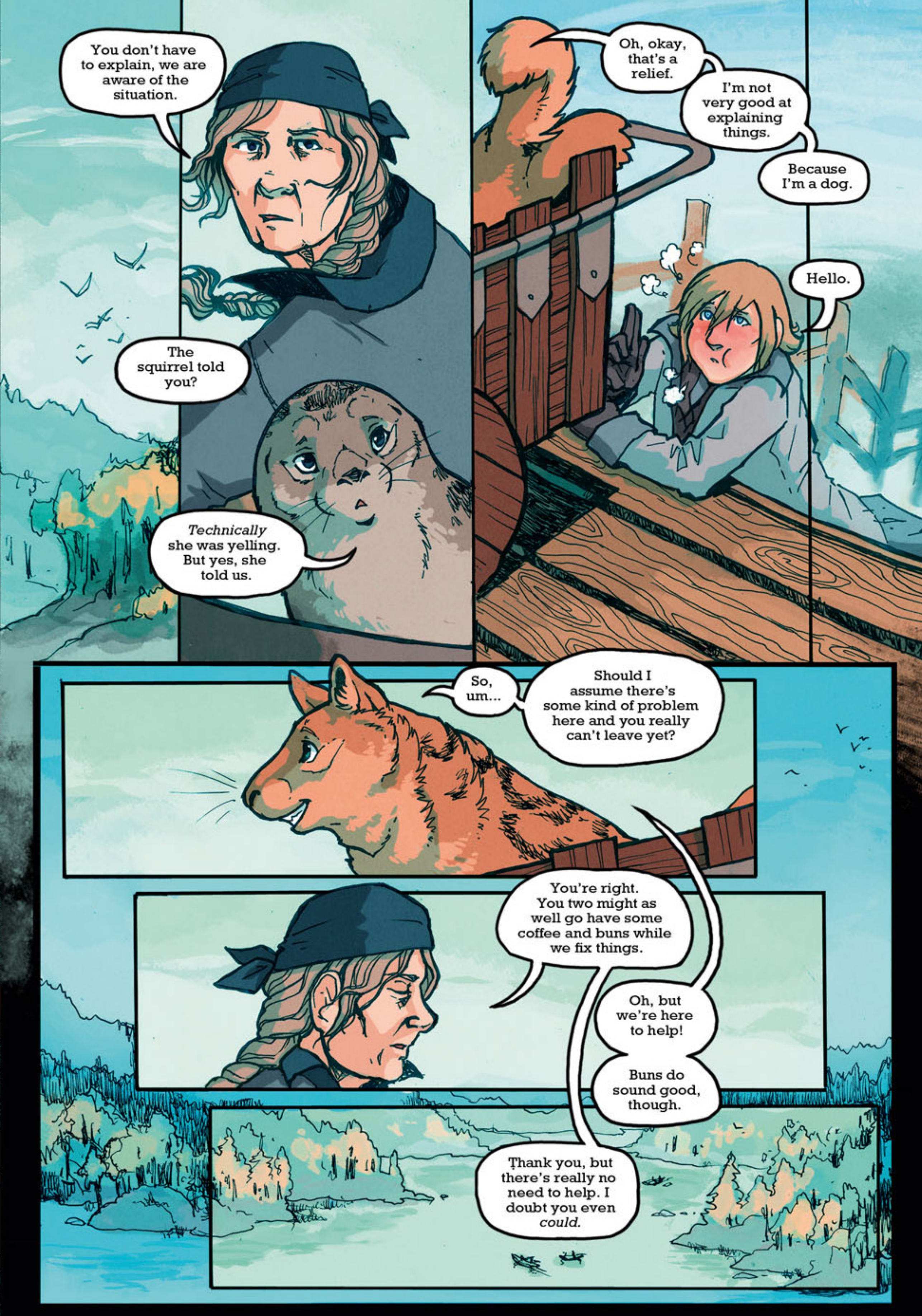

And you really should try being a bit nicer.
Calling someone fat is pretty rude.
Ville is fat, your brother is fat and you're *fat*.
Don't take it personally.
He's just acting up because he's tired, and a bird kind of threw up on him.
Well, that's no reason to be a complete *buttface*.
But it's nice to know why you smell of bird vomit.

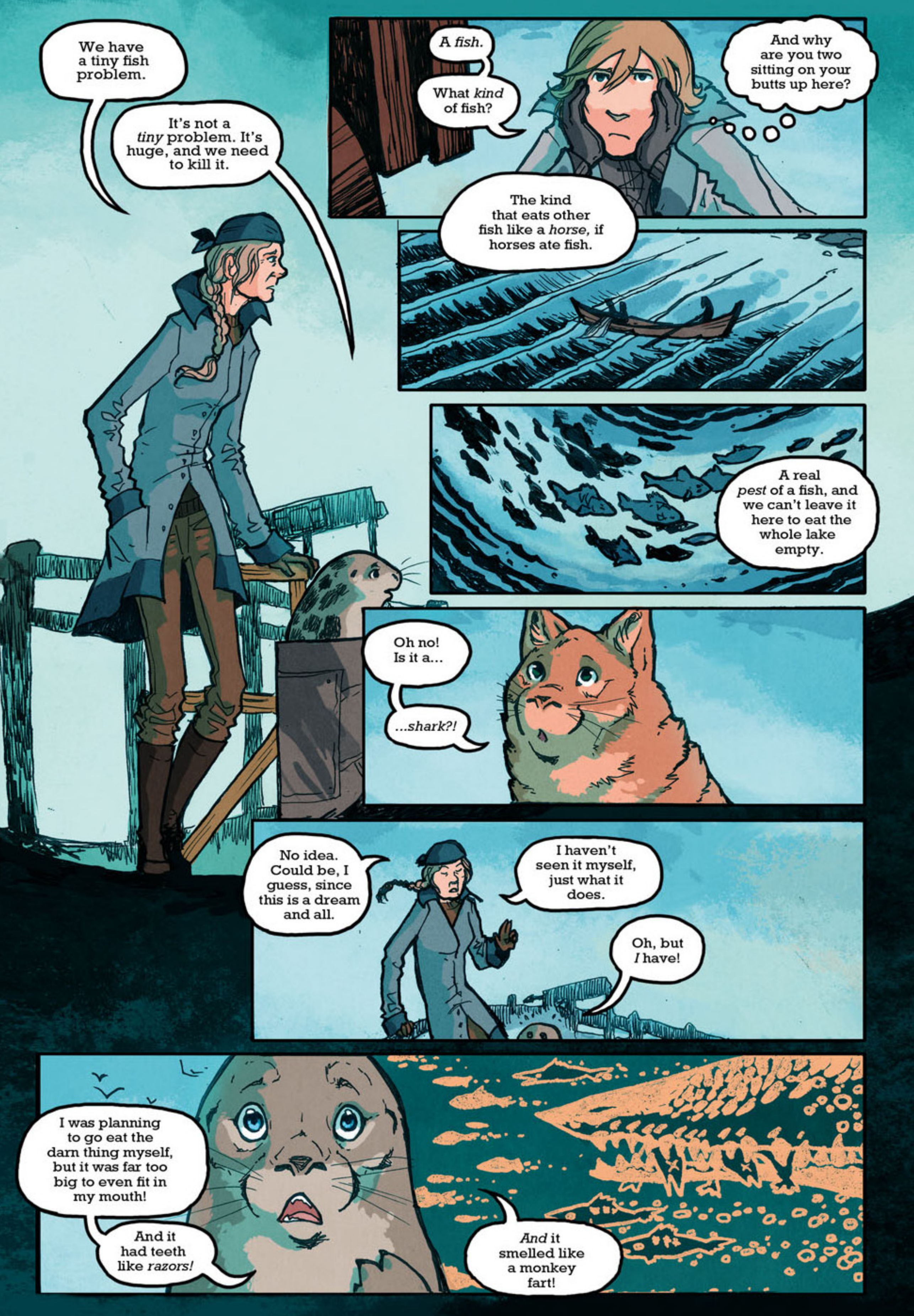

Hey, how are we going to get Ville up?
Can't he wait there?
No! I want to come with!
No, he wants to come with!
Hannu, help me climb the ladder.
I know I can do it!
Almost... *there...*
Just a little farther.
KNAKS!!
Oh, *crud!* Please tell me that sound didn't come from my knees!
Nope, that was my back.
If you need moral support for that, we could come with you too.
But aren't you happy I'm tagging along?
Sure, sure. I won't have to go talk with Åsa alone.

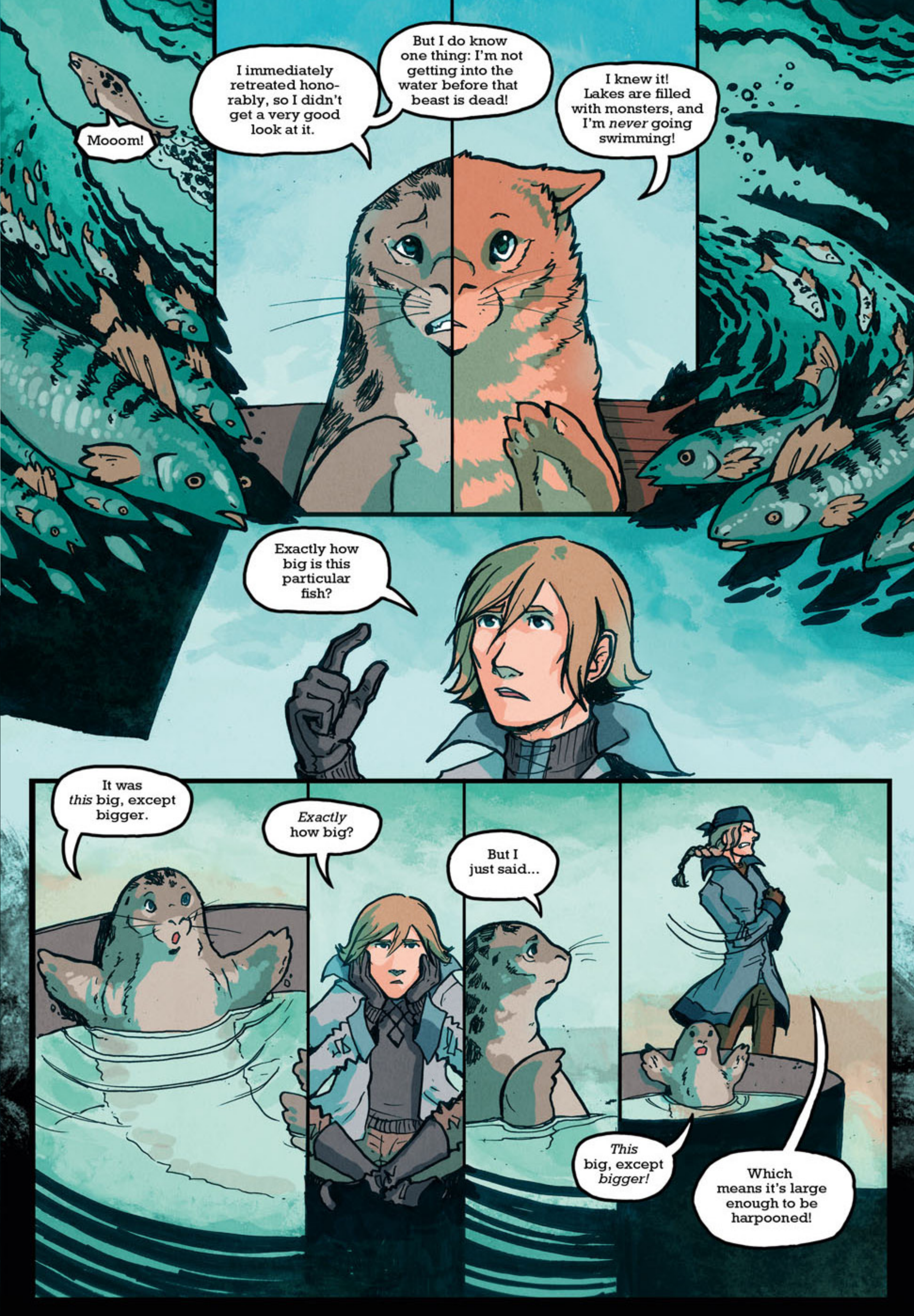

Um, yeah, that's really not necessary.
Where's Åsa?
Up there on the cliff.
She said it's the best location for spotting things.
Don't ask me *what* she's trying to spot.
Hey, *carts!*
Hee.
Or what the heck she's doing with a *seal* up there.
Here's your animal.
Oh, thanks.

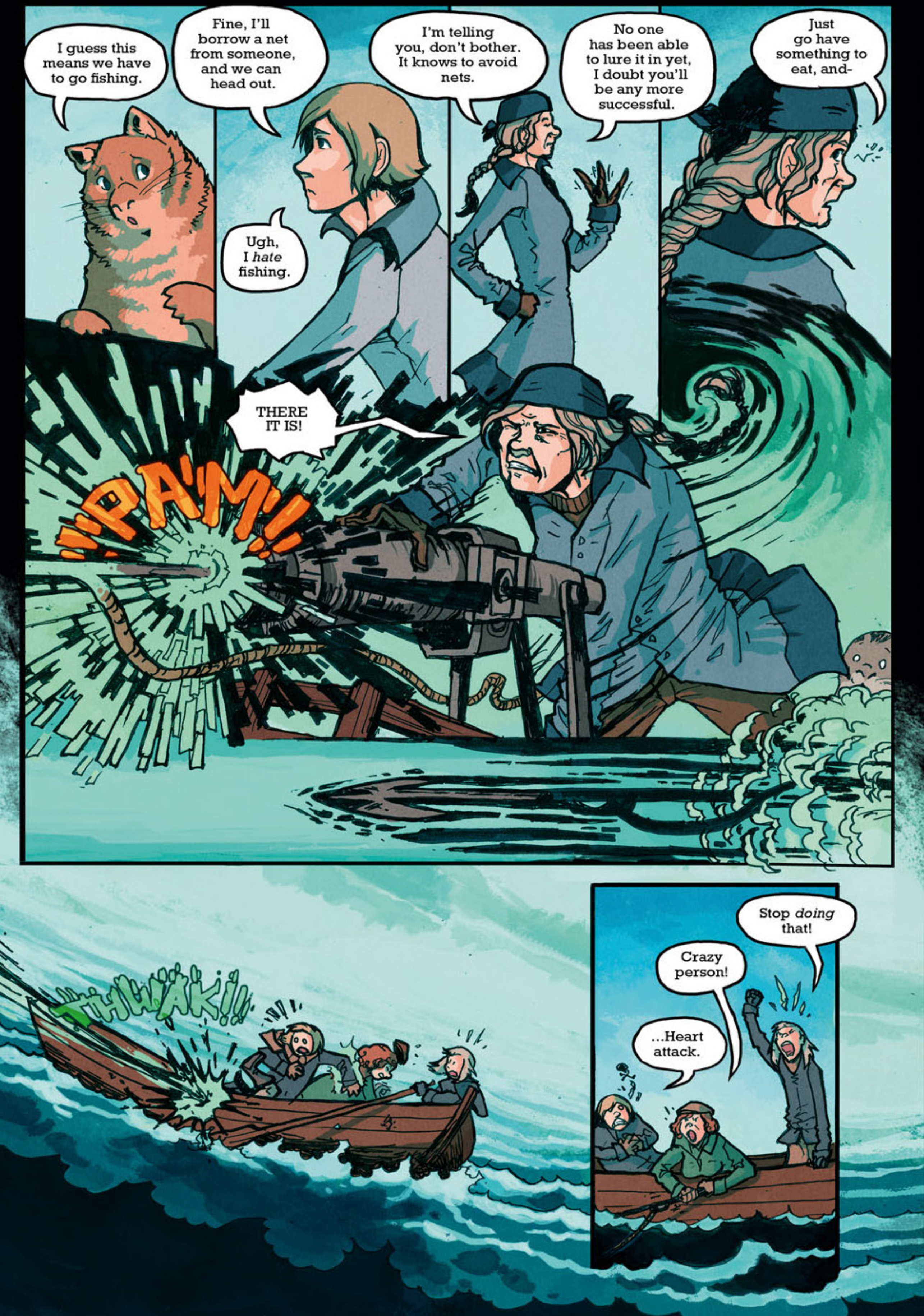

So would you like us to tag along, or...?
No! Thank you, and goodbye!
I don't think you'll be able to push me up there on your own, being so weak and all.
Shush!
So, you want to go get some coffee?
Mm.
You know, I have to agree with Riikka.
You've been particularly irritable today.
You know I don't mind, but people could get upset when you say... things.
Yes, I know, I'm sorry.
I'm feeling kind of iffy, and I don't really have the energy to pretend to be pleasant.
If it makes you happy, I promise I'll apologize to anyone who still remembers this tomorrow.
Hey, Åsa is Riikka and Anssi's aunt, right?
That's right.

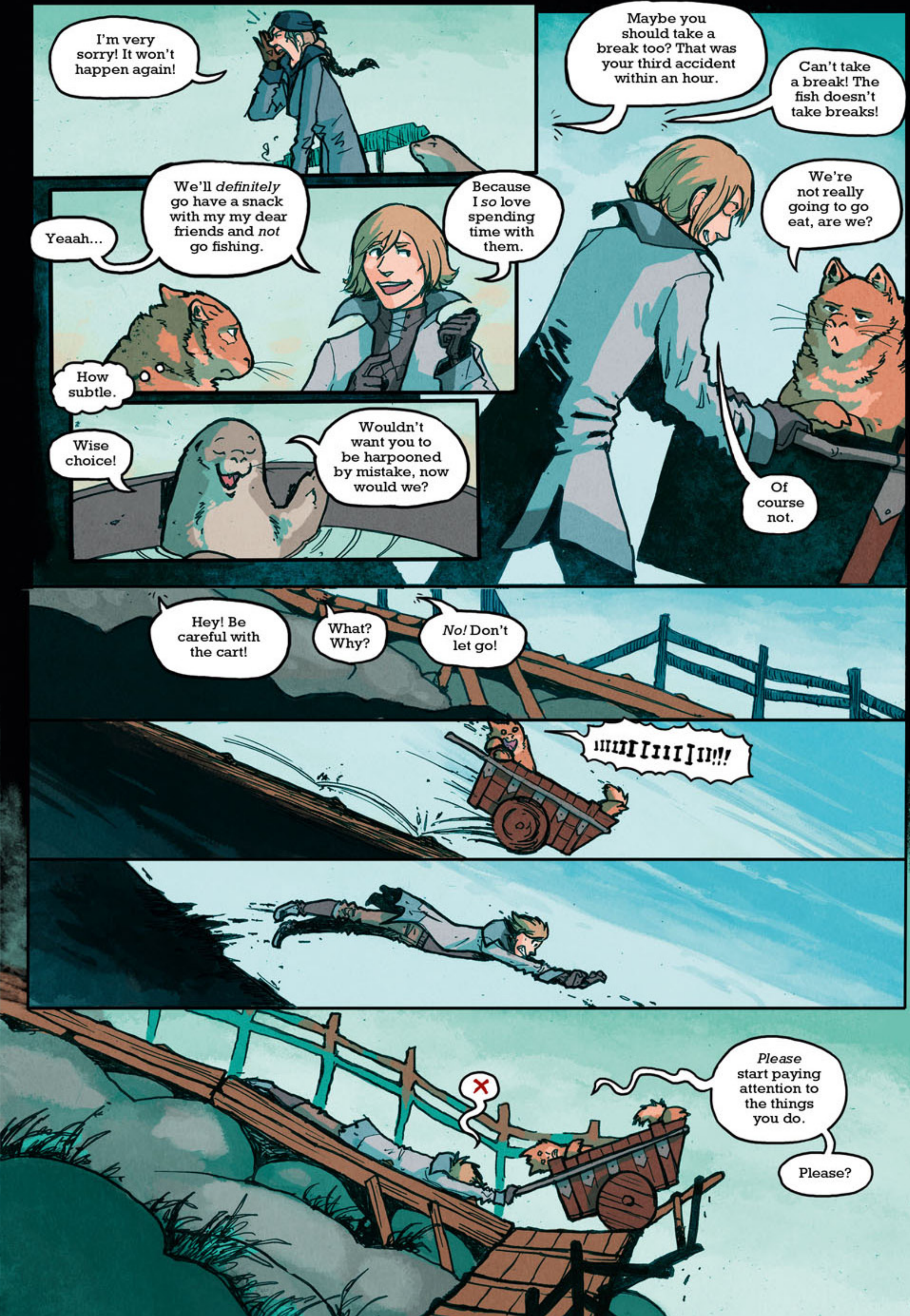

Åsa Skärsholm.
Owner of that really smelly fish processing plant a bit out of town.
Hey.
We've got visitors. And it's not your little niece and nephew for a change.
Um, hi, hello?
I hope we're not interrupting anything.
We're here to help you get home, and, um-
-because this is kind of a dream, you see?
Okay, so, there was this fox, and he did... something, and we-
...so, uh...
Hannu! Help me out here, will you?
Hrrk!

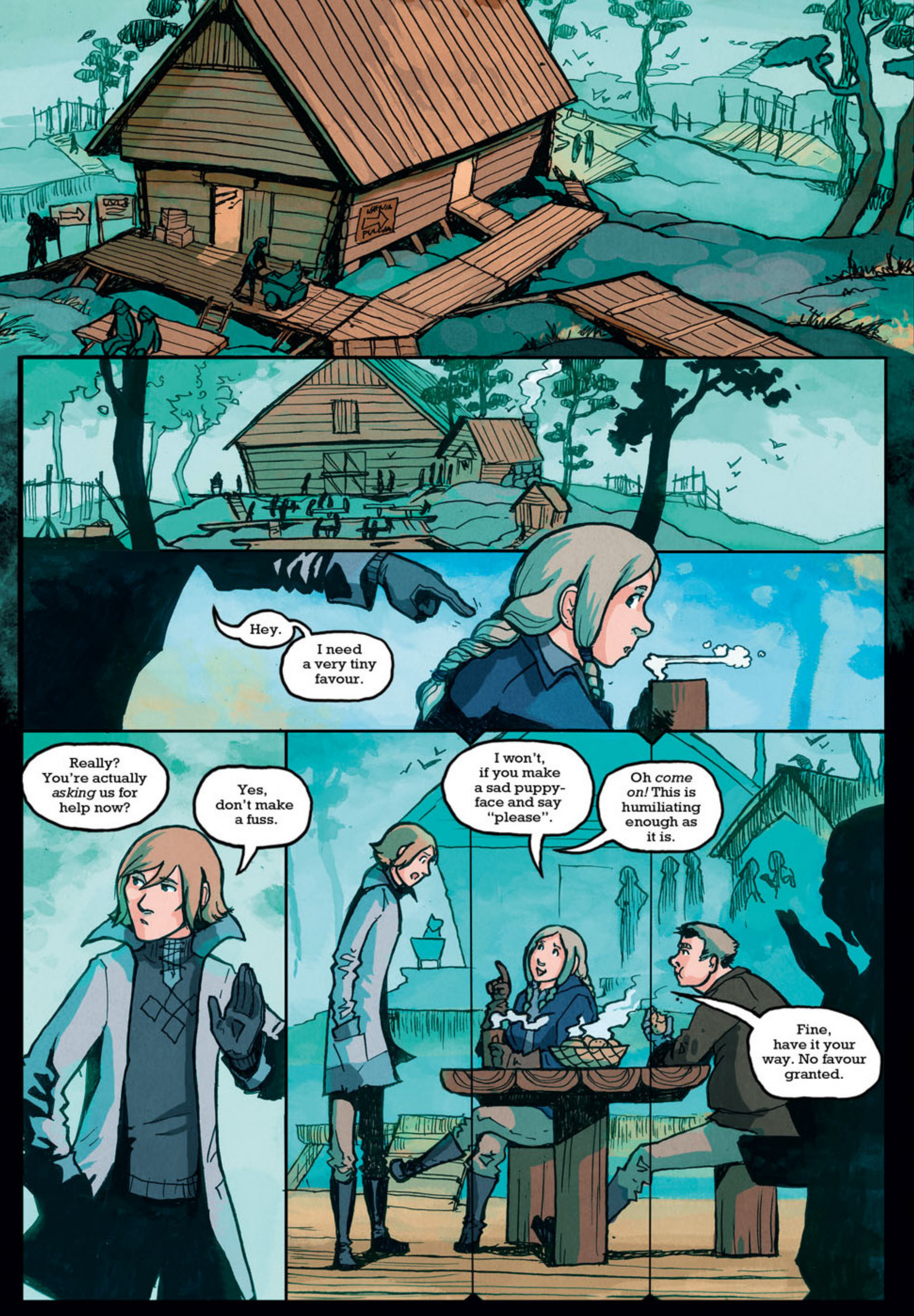

You don't have to explain, we are aware of the situation.
The squirrel told you?
Technically she was yelling. But yes, she told us.
Oh, okay, that's a relief.
I'm not very good at explaining things.
Because I'm a dog.
Hello.
So, um...
Should I assume there's some kind of problem here and you really can't leave yet?
You're right. You two might as well go have some coffee and buns while we fix things.
Oh, but we're here to help!
Buns do sound good, though.
Thank you, but there's really no need to help. I doubt you even *could*.

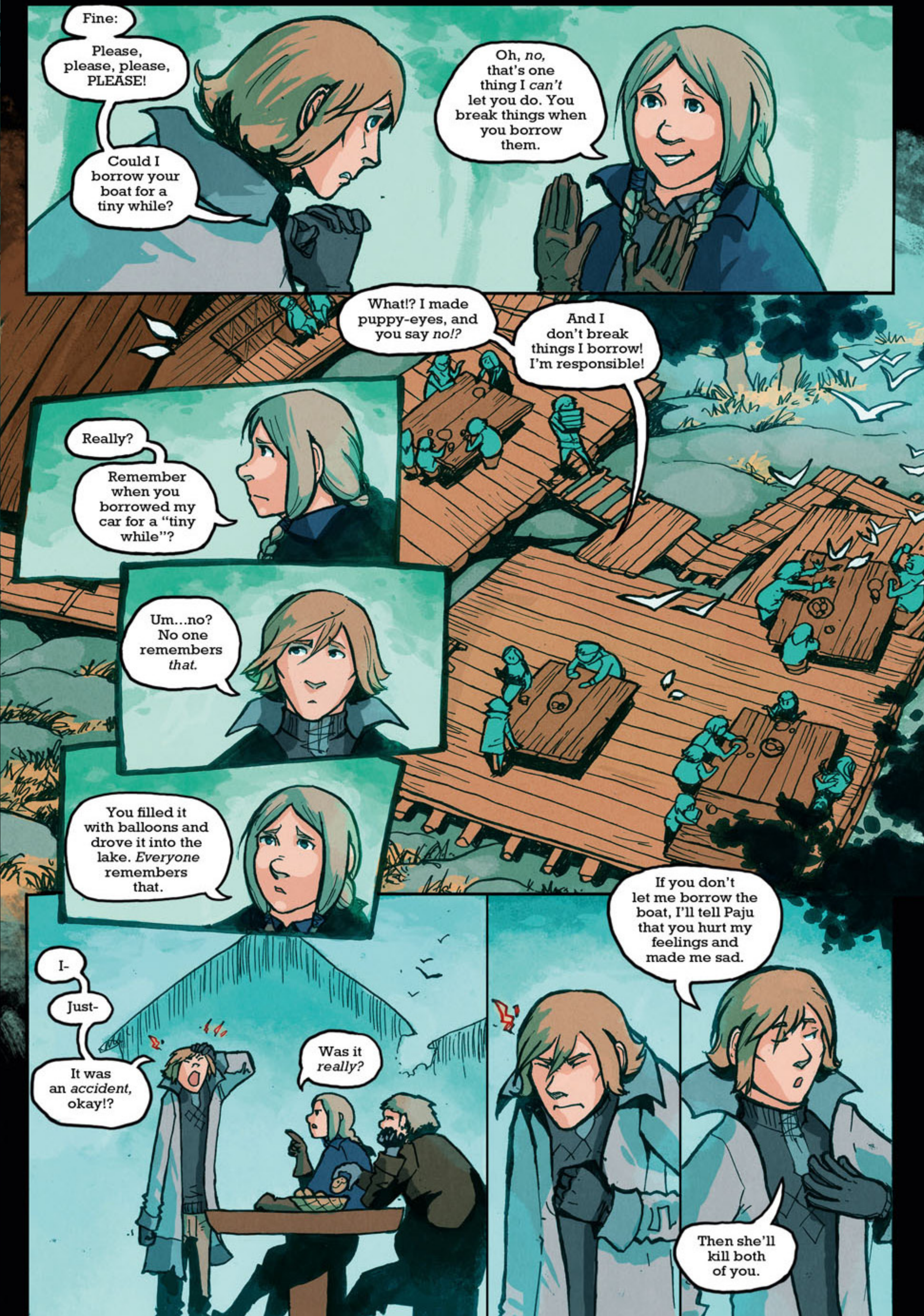

We have a tiny fish problem.
It's not a *tiny* problem. It's huge, and we need to kill it.
A *fish*.
What *kind* of fish?
And why are you two sitting on your butts up here?
The kind that eats other fish like a *horse*, if horses ate fish.
A real *pest* of a fish, and we can't leave it here to eat the whole lake empty.
Oh no! Is it a...
...*shark?!*
No idea. Could be, I guess, since this is a dream and all.
I haven't seen it myself, just what it does.
Oh, but *I* have!
I was planning to go eat the darn thing myself, but it was far too big to even fit in my mouth!
And it had teeth like *razors!*
And it smelled like a monkey fart!

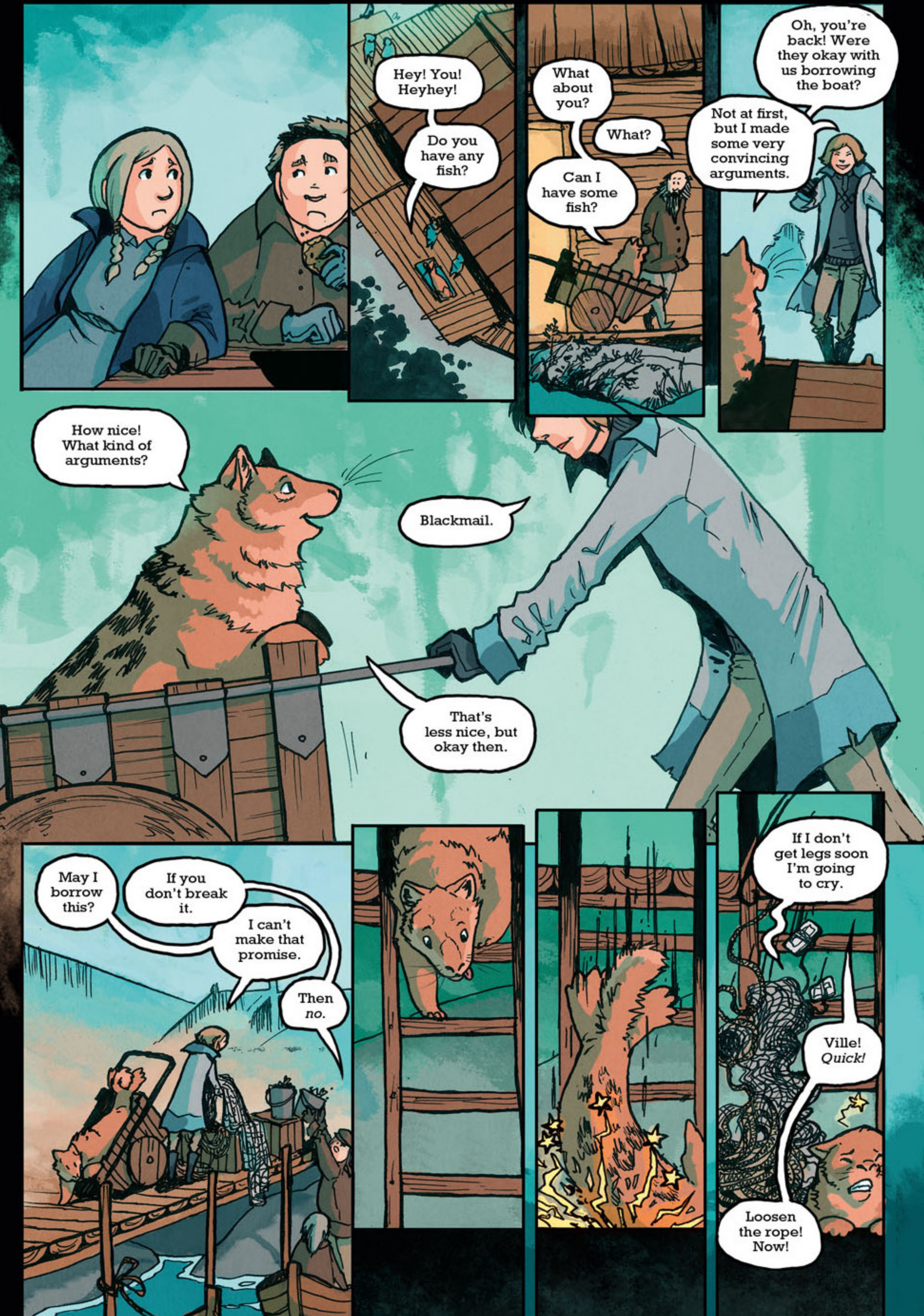

Mooom!
I immediately retreated honorably, so I didn't get a very good look at it.
But I do know one thing: I'm not getting into the water before that beast is dead!
I knew it! Lakes are filled with monsters, and I'm *never* going swimming!
Exactly how big is this particular fish?
It was *this* big, except bigger.
Exactly how big?
But I just said...
This big, except *bigger!*
Which means it's large enough to be harpooned!

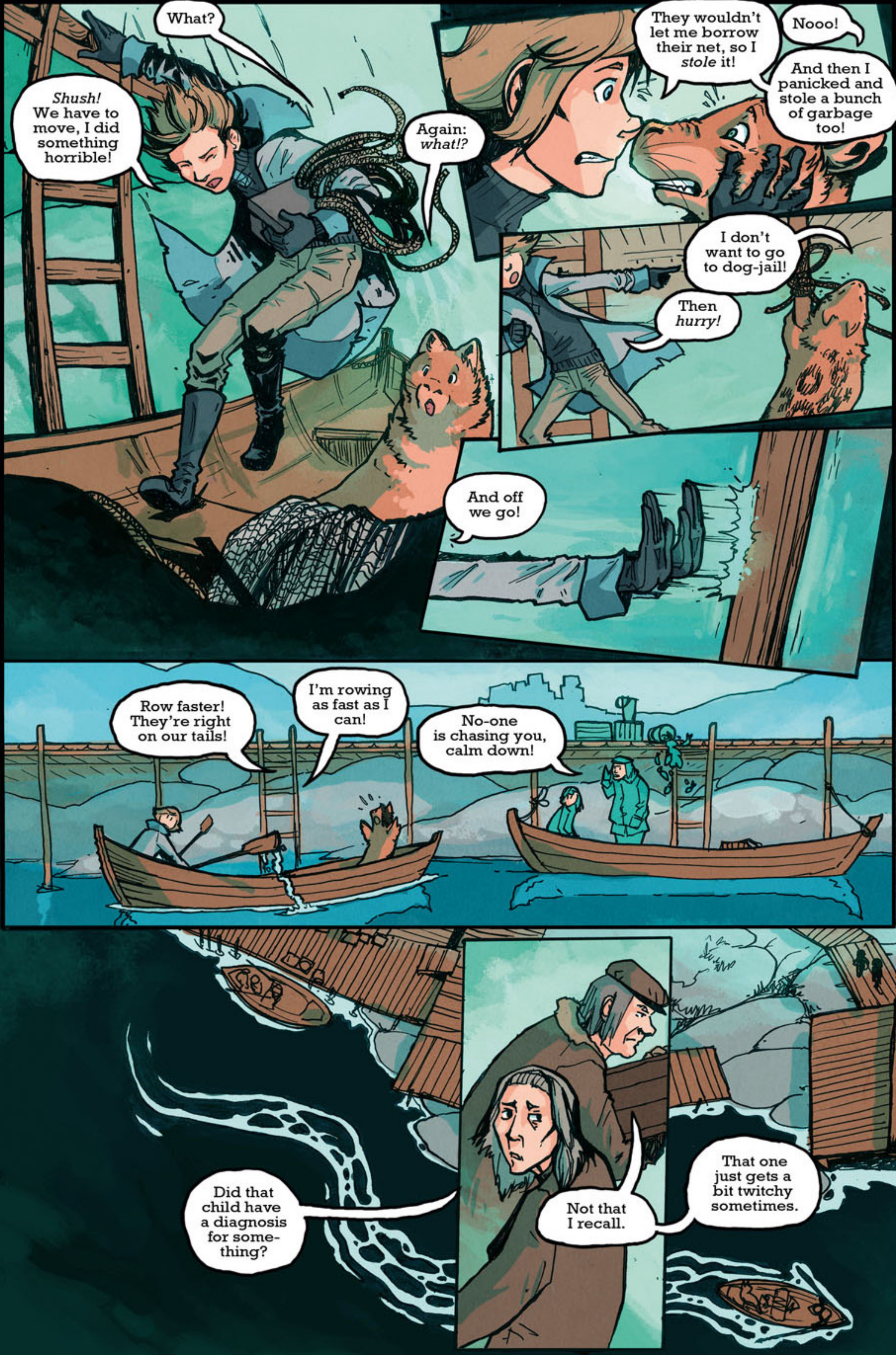

I guess this means we have to go fishing.
Fine, I'll borrow a net from someone, and we can head out.
Ugh, I *hate* fishing.
I'm telling you, don't bother. It knows to avoid nets.
No one has been able to lure it in yet, I doubt you'll be any more successful.
Just go have something to eat, and-
THERE IT IS!
PAM!!
THWAK!!
Stop *doing* that!
Crazy person!
...Heart attack.

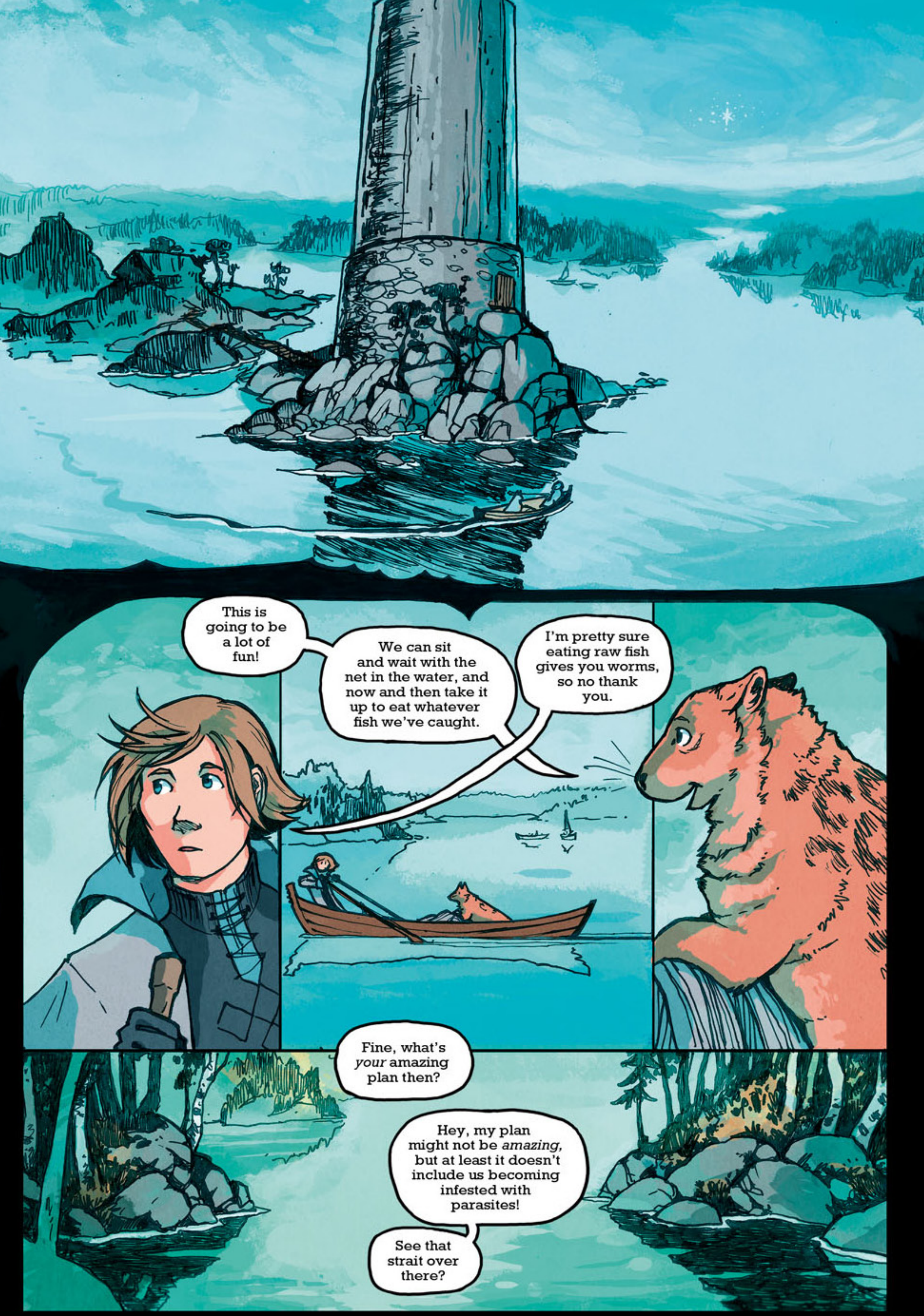

I'm very sorry! It won't happen again!
Maybe you should take a break too? That was your third accident within an hour.
Can't take a break! The fish doesn't take breaks!
Yeaah...
We'll *definitely* go have a snack with my my dear friends and *not* go fishing.
Because I *so* love spending time with them.
How subtle.
Wise choice!
Wouldn't want you to be harpooned by mistake, now would we?
We're not really going to go eat, are we?
Of course not.
Hey! Be careful with the cart!
What? Why?
No! Don't let go!
IIIIIIIIIIII!!!
Please start paying attention to the things you do.
Please?

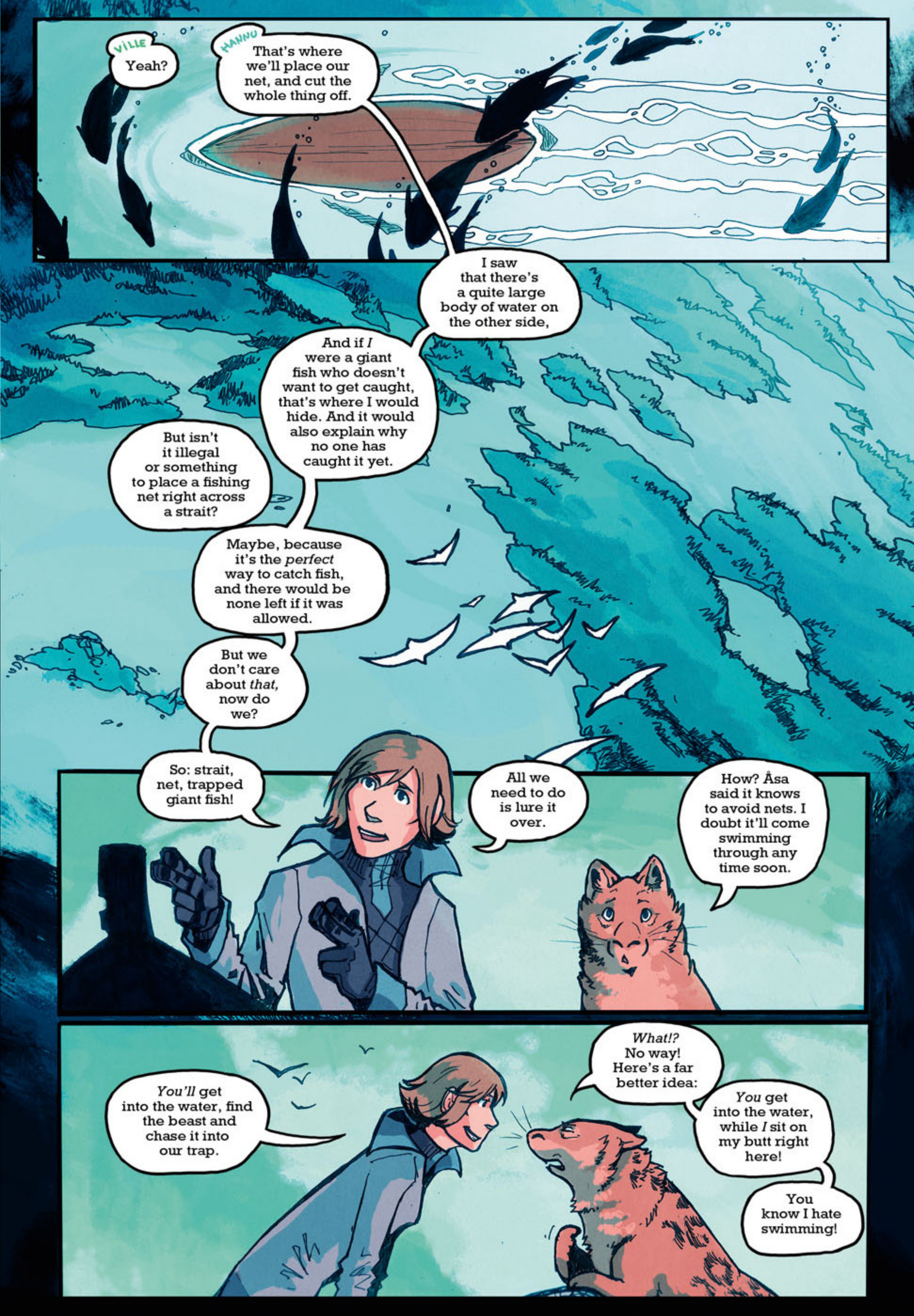

Hey.
I need a very tiny favour.
Really? You're actually *asking* us for help now?
Yes, don't make a fuss.
I won't, if you make a sad puppy-face and say "please".
Oh *come on!* This is humiliating enough as it is.
Fine, have it your way. No favour granted.

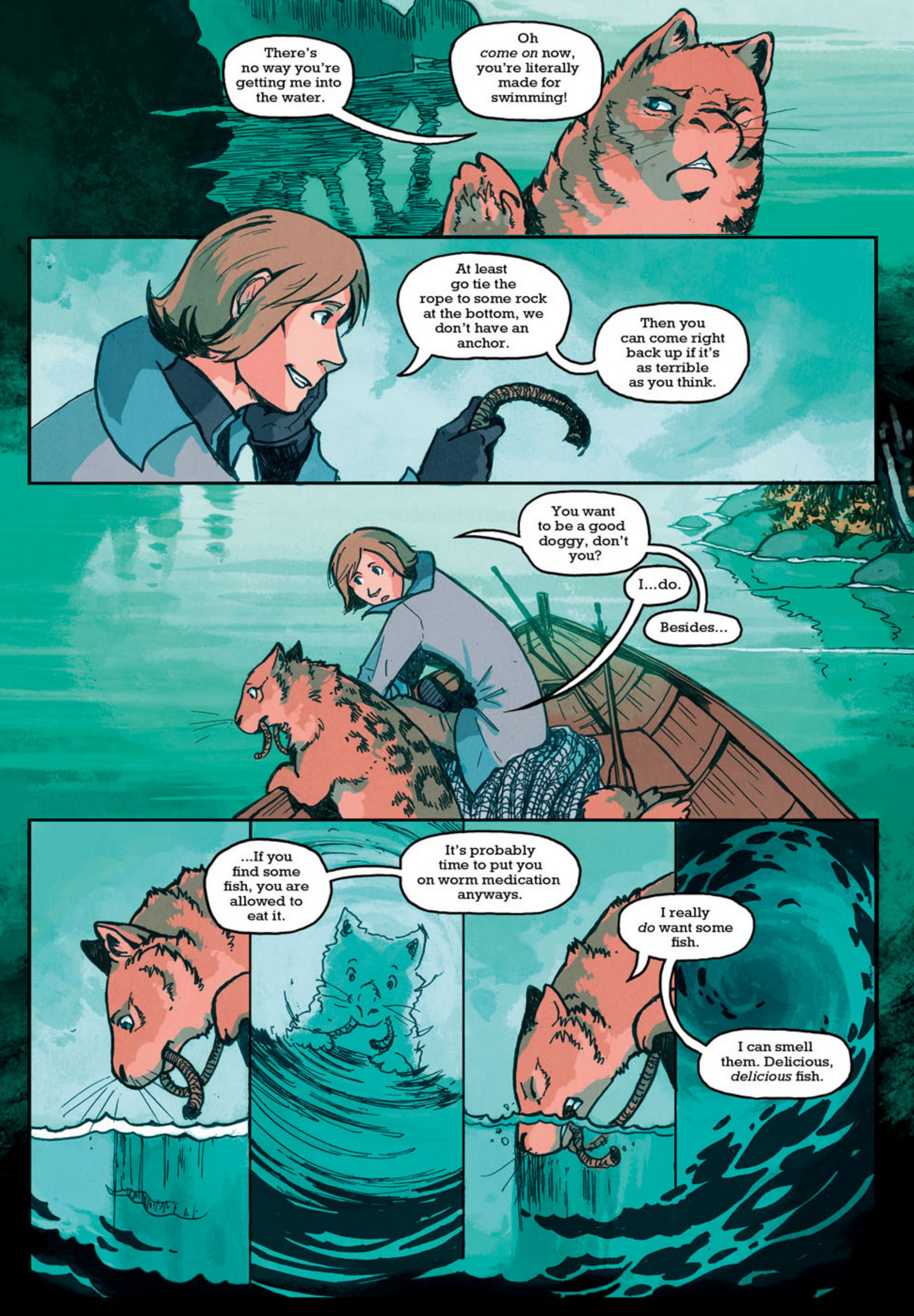

Fine:
Please, please, please, PLEASE!
Could I borrow your boat for a tiny while?
Oh, *no,* that's one thing I *can't* let you do. You break things when you borrow them.
What!? I made puppy-eyes, and you say *no!?*
And I don't break things I borrow! I'm responsible!
Really?
Remember when you borrowed my car for a "tiny while"?
Um...no? No one remembers *that.*
You filled it with balloons and drove it into the lake. *Everyone* remembers that.
I-
Just-
It was an *accident,* okay!?
Was it *really?*
If you don't let me borrow the boat, I'll tell Paju that you hurt my feelings and made me sad.
Then she'll kill both of you.

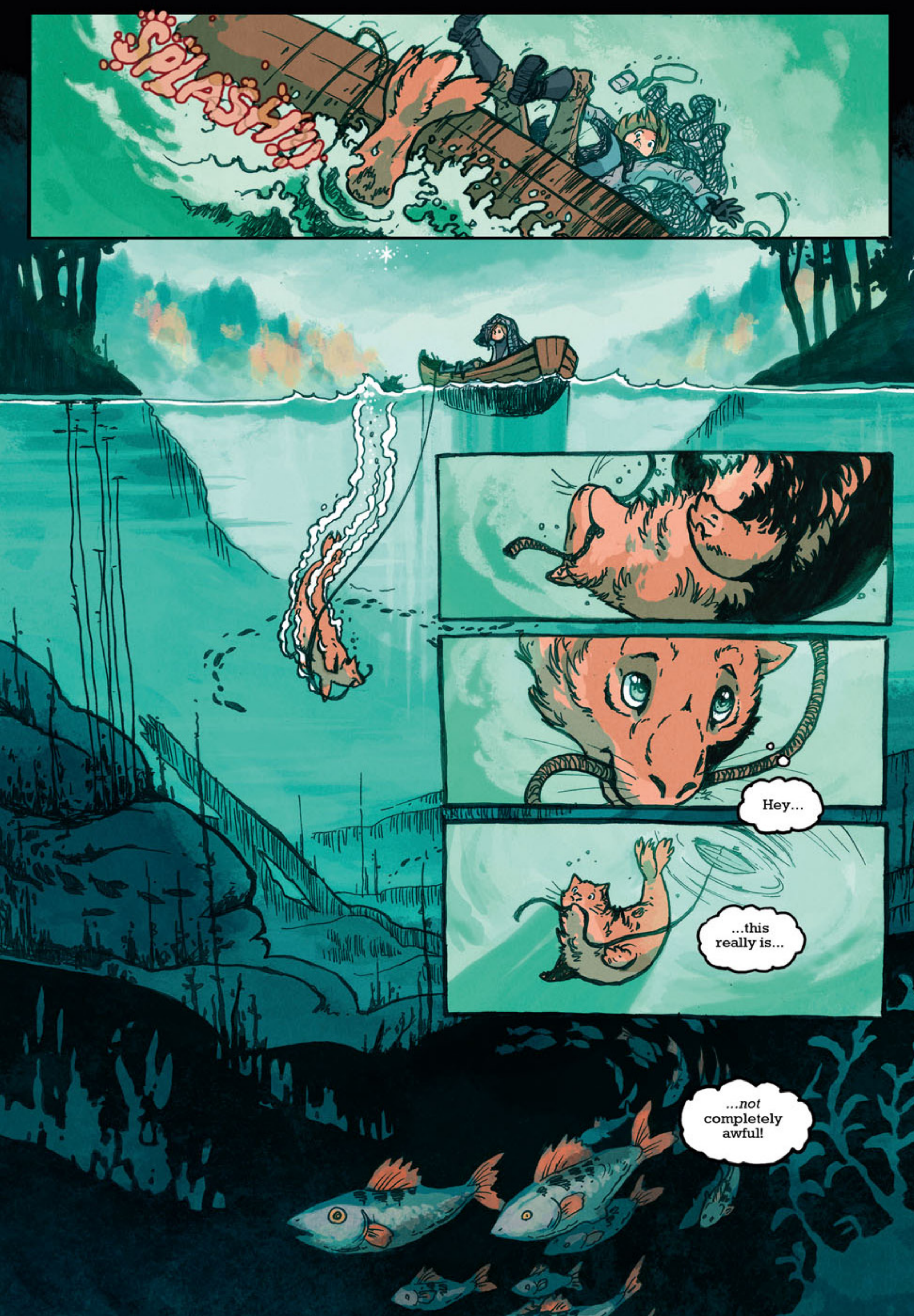

Hey! You! Heyhey!
Do you have any fish?
What about you?
What?
Can I have some fish?
Oh, you're back! Were they okay with us borrowing the boat?
Not at first, but I made some very convincing arguments.
How nice! What kind of arguments?
Blackmail.
That's less nice, but okay then.
May I borrow this?
If you don't break it.
I can't make that promise.
Then *no.*
If I don't get legs soon I'm going to cry.
Ville! *Quick!*
Loosen the rope! Now!

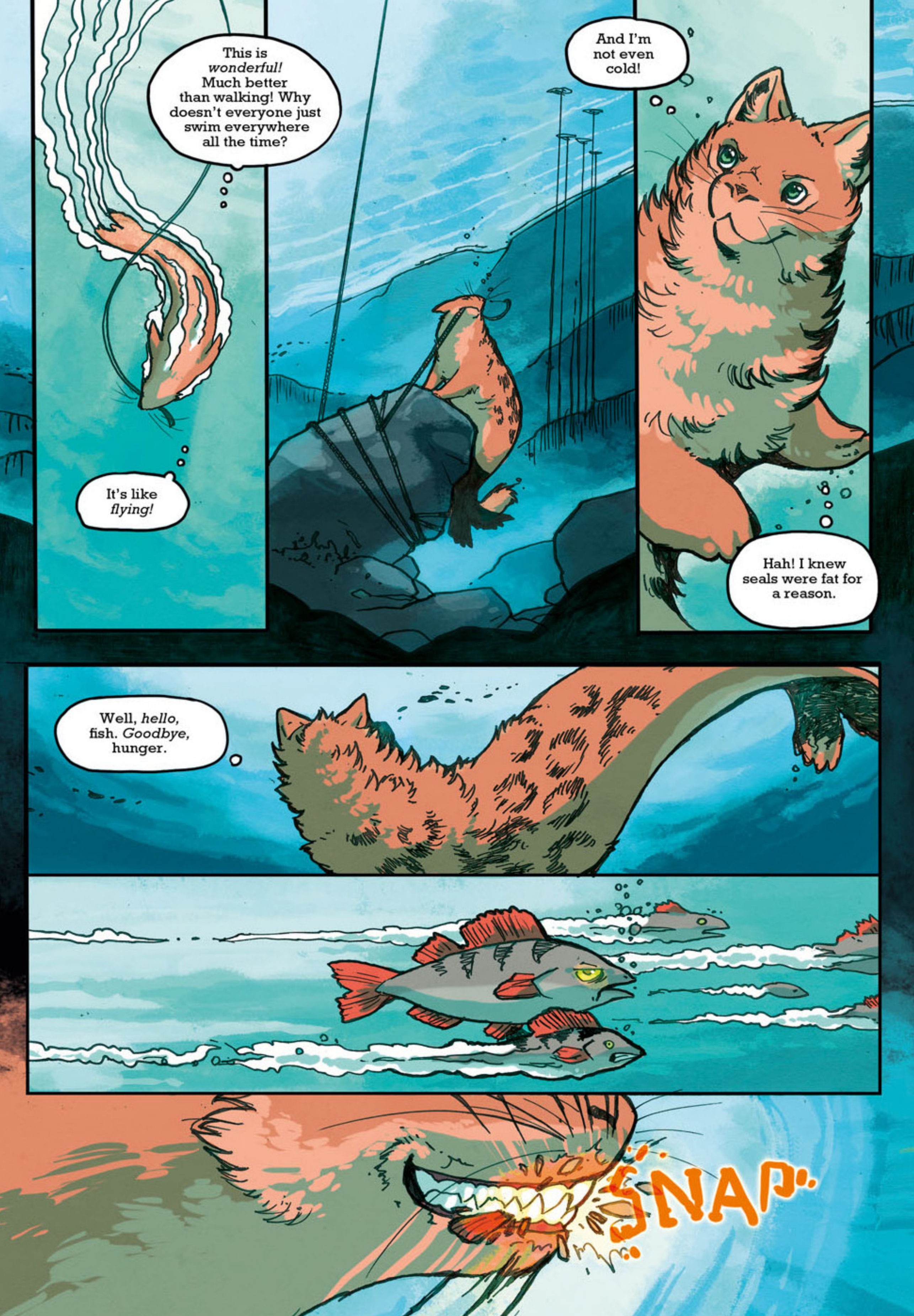

What?
Shush! We have to move, I did something horrible!
Again: *what!?*
They wouldn't let me borrow their net, so I *stole* it!
Nooo!
And then I panicked and stole a bunch of garbage too!
I don't want to go to dog-jail!
Then *hurry!*
And off we go!
Row faster! They're right on our tails!
I'm rowing as fast as I can!
No-one is chasing you, calm down!
Did that child have a diagnosis for some-thing?
Not that I recall.
That one just gets a bit twitchy sometimes.

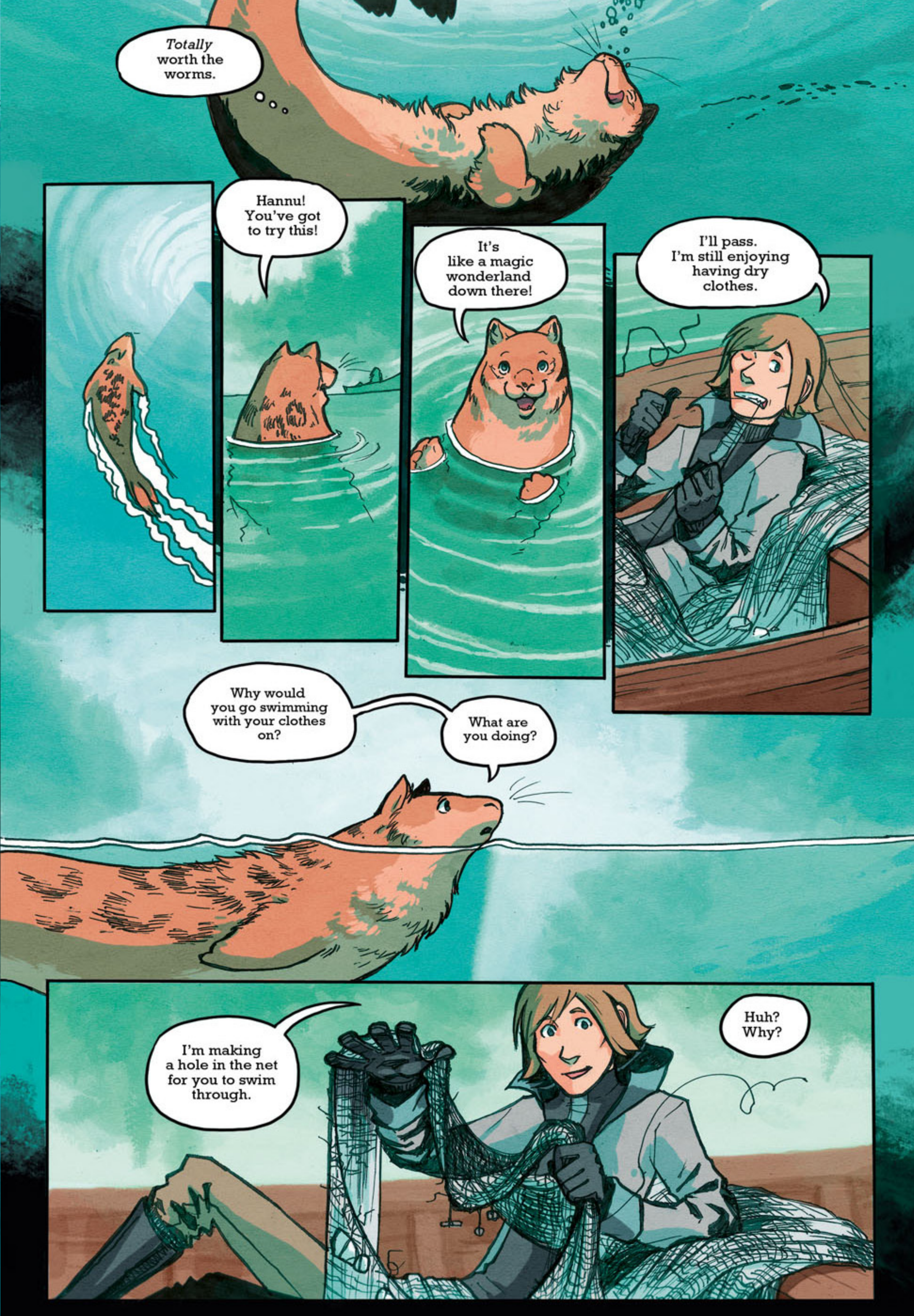

This is going to be a lot of fun!
We can sit and wait with the net in the water, and now and then take it up to eat whatever fish we've caught.
I'm pretty sure eating raw fish gives you worms, so no thank you.
Fine, what's *your* amazing plan then?
Hey, my plan might not be *amazing,* but at least it doesn't include us becoming infested with parasites!
See that strait over there?

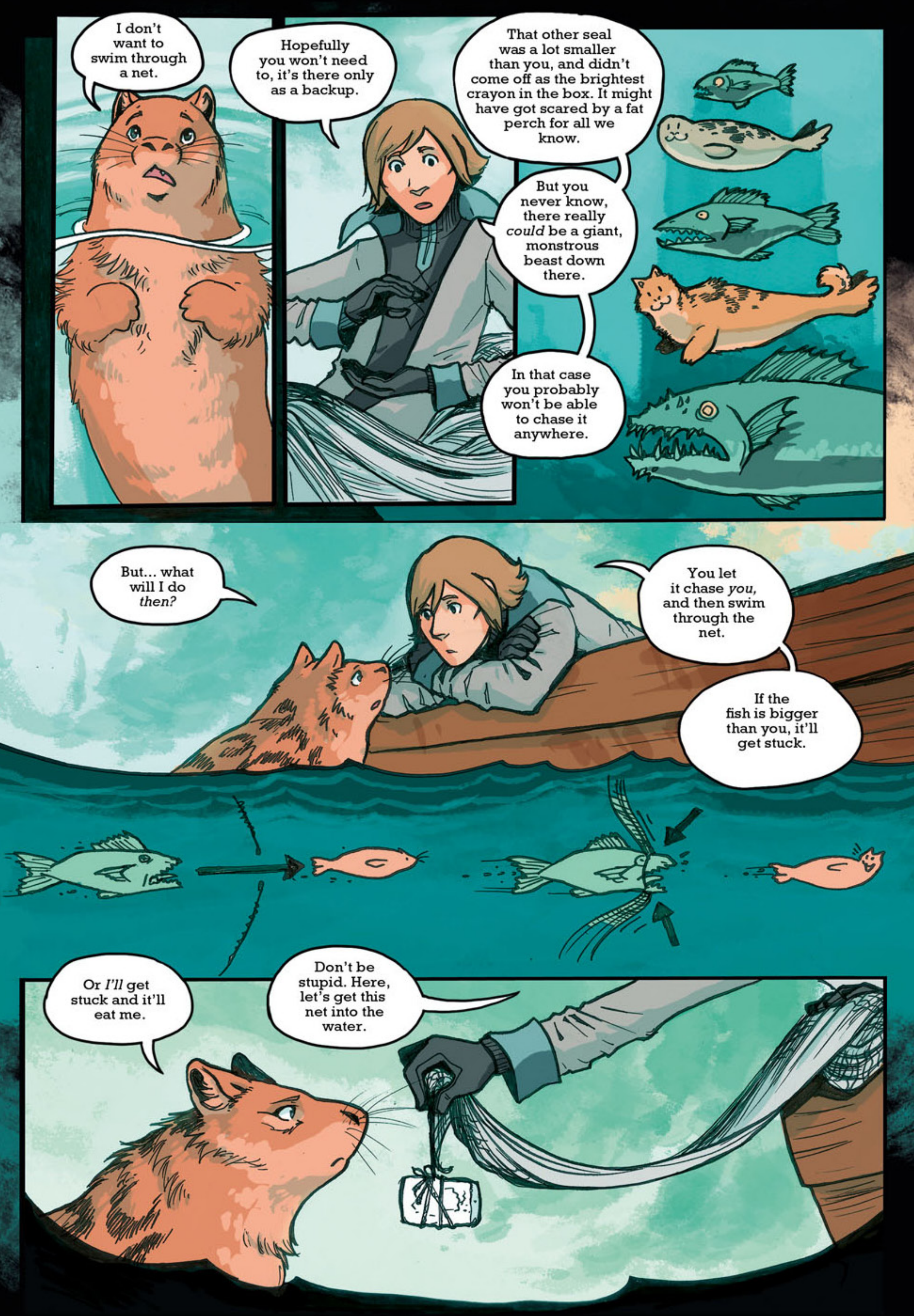

VILLE
Yeah?
HANNU
That's where we'll place our net, and cut the whole thing off.
I saw that there's a quite large body of water on the other side,
And if *I* were a giant fish who doesn't want to get caught, that's where I would hide. And it would also explain why no one has caught it yet.
But isn't it illegal or something to place a fishing net right across a strait?
Maybe, because it's the *perfect* way to catch fish, and there would be none left if it was allowed.
But we don't care about *that,* now do we?
So: strait, net, trapped giant fish!
All we need to do is lure it over.
How? Åsa said it knows to avoid nets. I doubt it'll come swimming through any time soon.
You'll get into the water, find the beast and chase it into our trap.
What!? No way! Here's a far better idea:
You get into the water, while *I* sit on my butt right here!
You know I hate swimming!

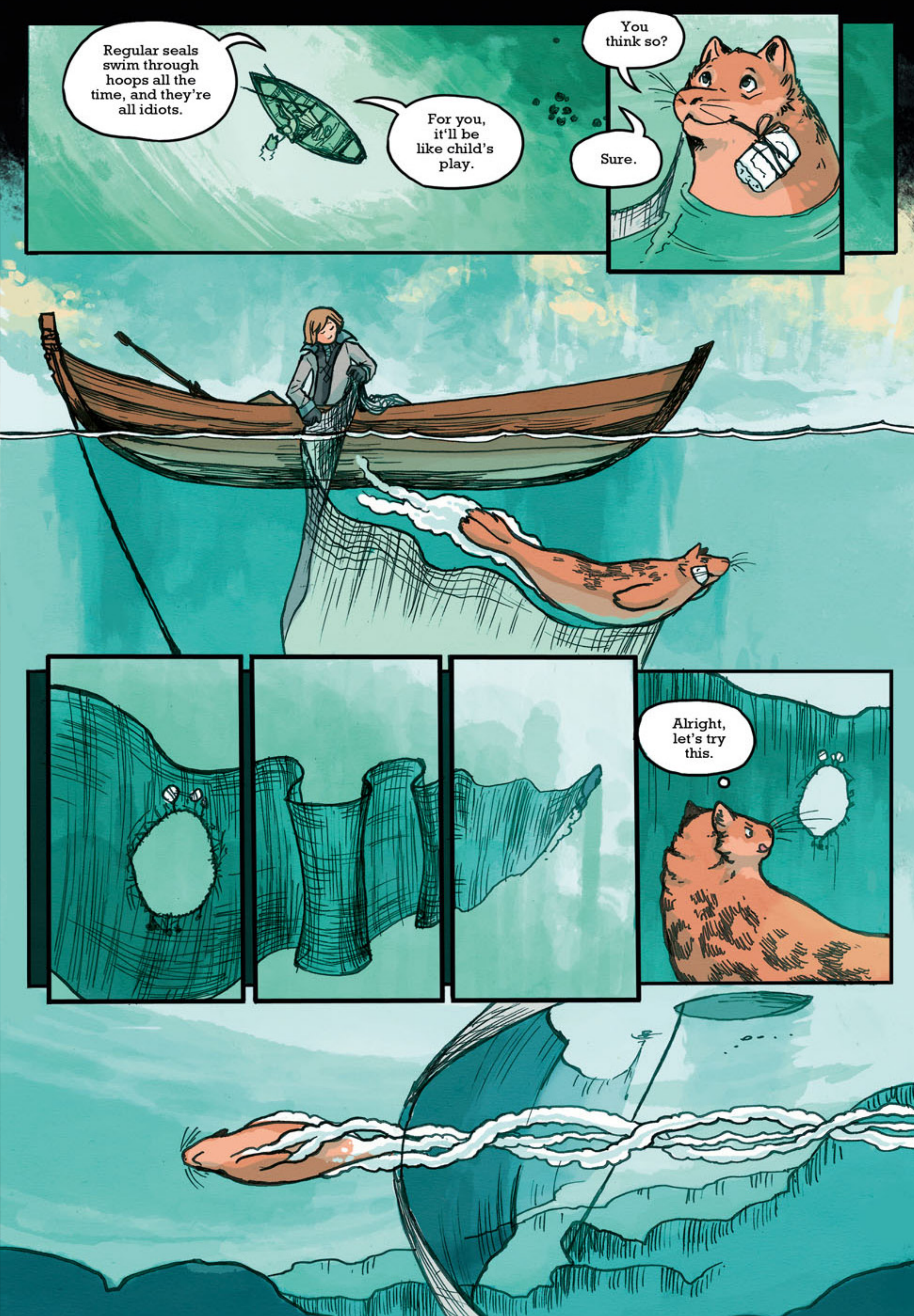

There's no way you're getting me into the water.
Oh *come on* now, you're literally made for swimming!
At least go tie the rope to some rock at the bottom, we don't have an anchor.
Then you can come right back up if it's as terrible as you think.
You want to be a good doggy, don't you?
I...do.
Besides...
...If you find some fish, you are allowed to eat it.
It's probably time to put you on worm medication anyways.
I really *do* want some fish.
I can smell them. Delicious, *delicious* fish.

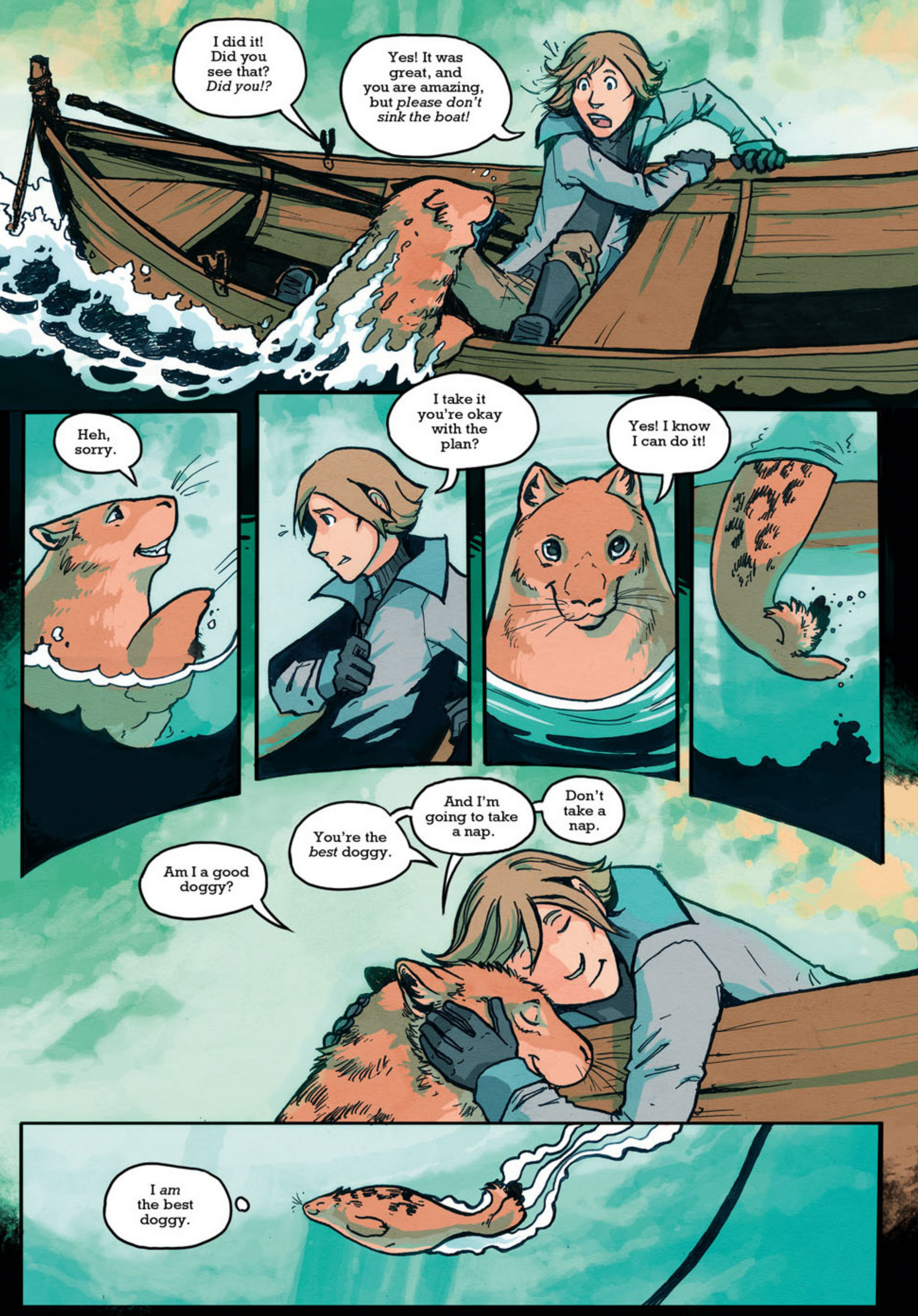

SPLASH!!!
Hey...
...this really is...
...*not* completely awful!

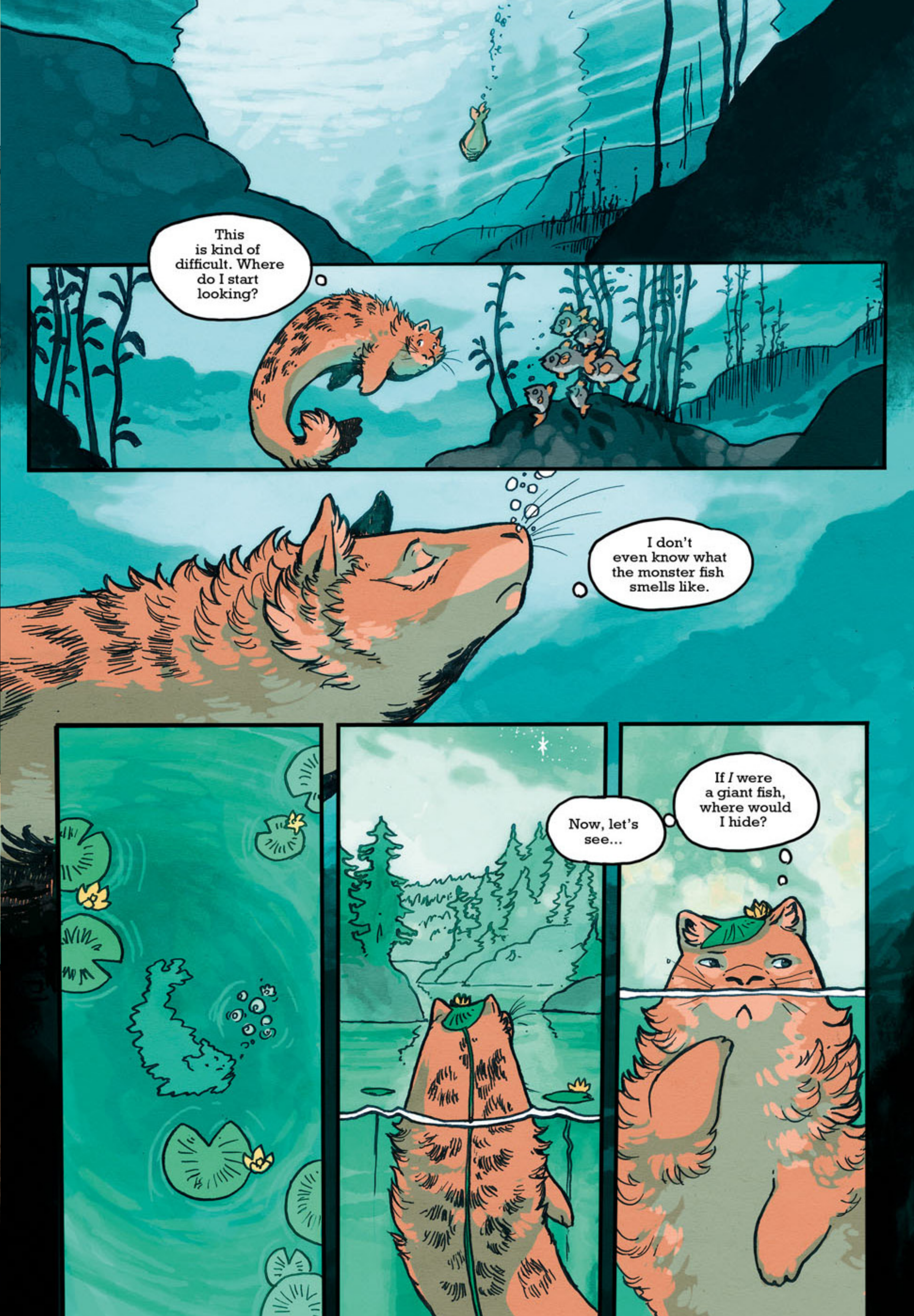

This is *wonderful!* Much better than walking! Why doesn't everyone just swim everywhere all the time?
It's like *flying!*
And I'm not even cold!
Hah! I knew seals were fat for a reason.
Well, *hello,* fish. *Goodbye,* hunger.
SNAP

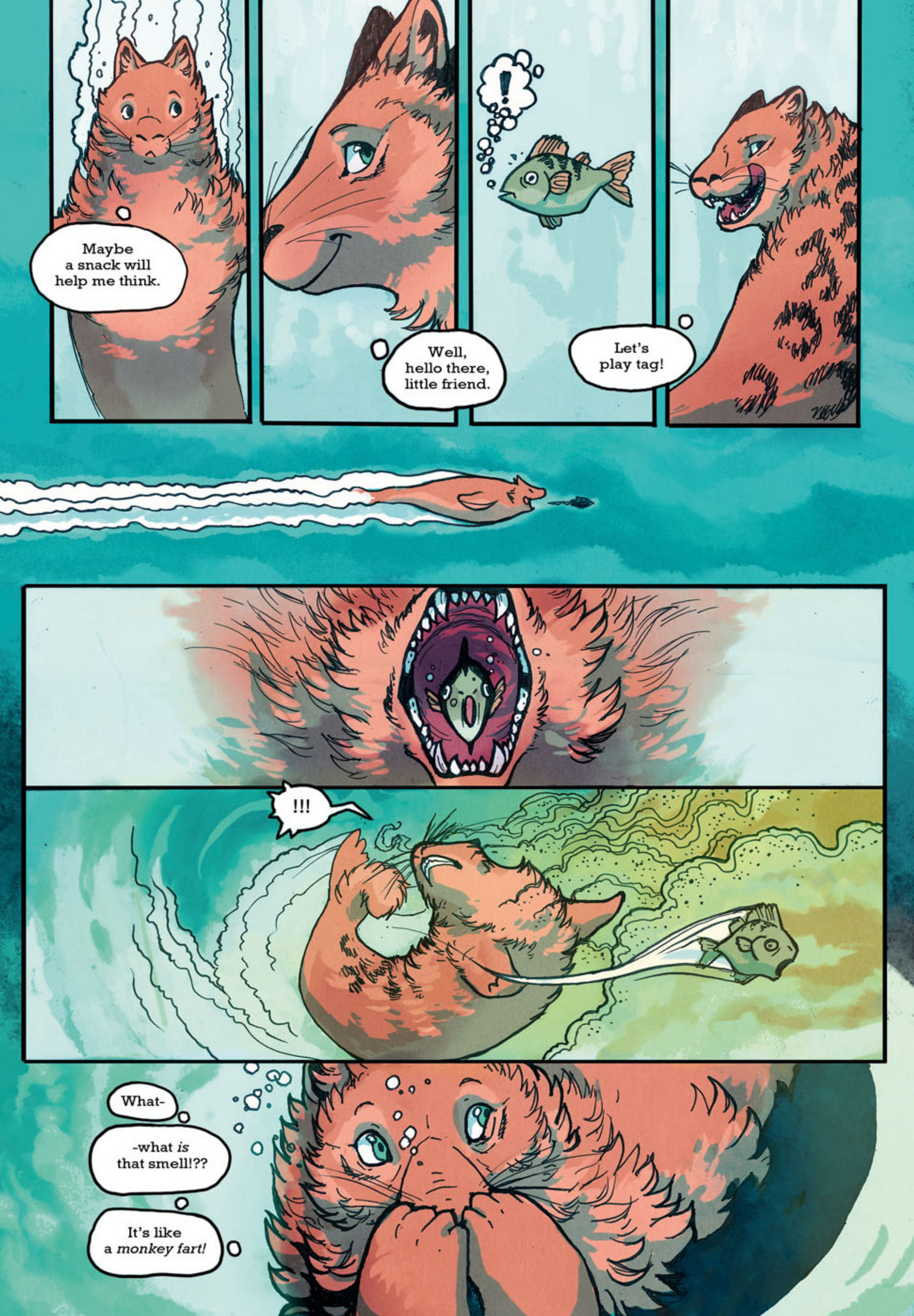

Totally worth the worms.
Hannu! You've got to try this!
It's like a magic wonderland down there!
I'll pass. I'm still enjoying having dry clothes.
Why would you go swimming with your clothes on?
What are you doing?
I'm making a hole in the net for you to swim through.
Huh? Why?

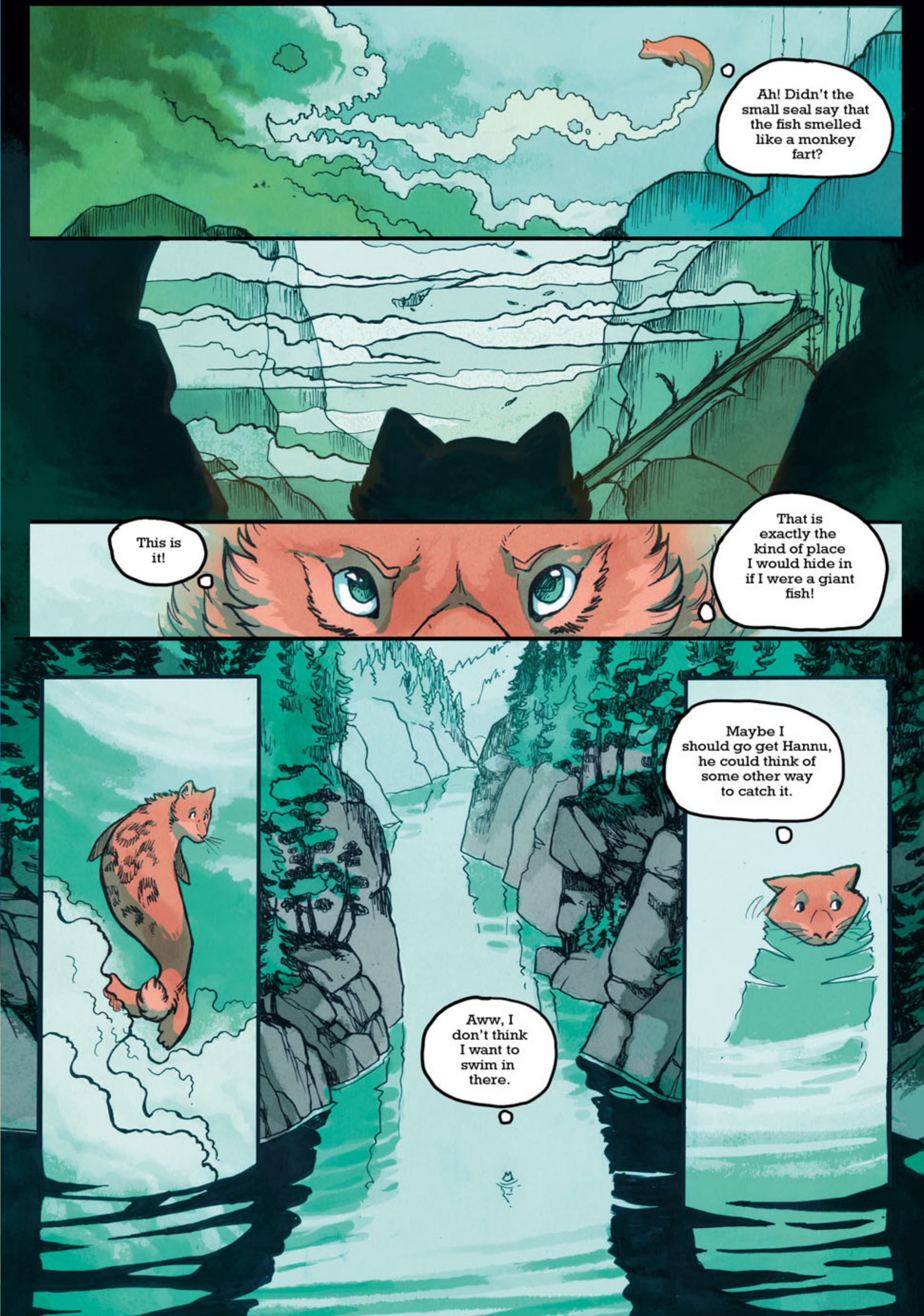

I don't want to swim through a net.
Hopefully you won't need to, it's there only as a backup.
That other seal was a lot smaller than you, and didn't come off as the brightest crayon in the box. It might have got scared by a fat perch for all we know.
But you never know, there really *could* be a giant, monstrous beast down there.
In that case you probably won't be able to chase it anywhere.
But… what will I do *then?*
You let it chase *you,* and then swim through the net.
If the fish is bigger than you, it'll get stuck.
Or *I'll* get stuck and it'll eat me.
Don't be stupid. Here, let's get this net into the water.

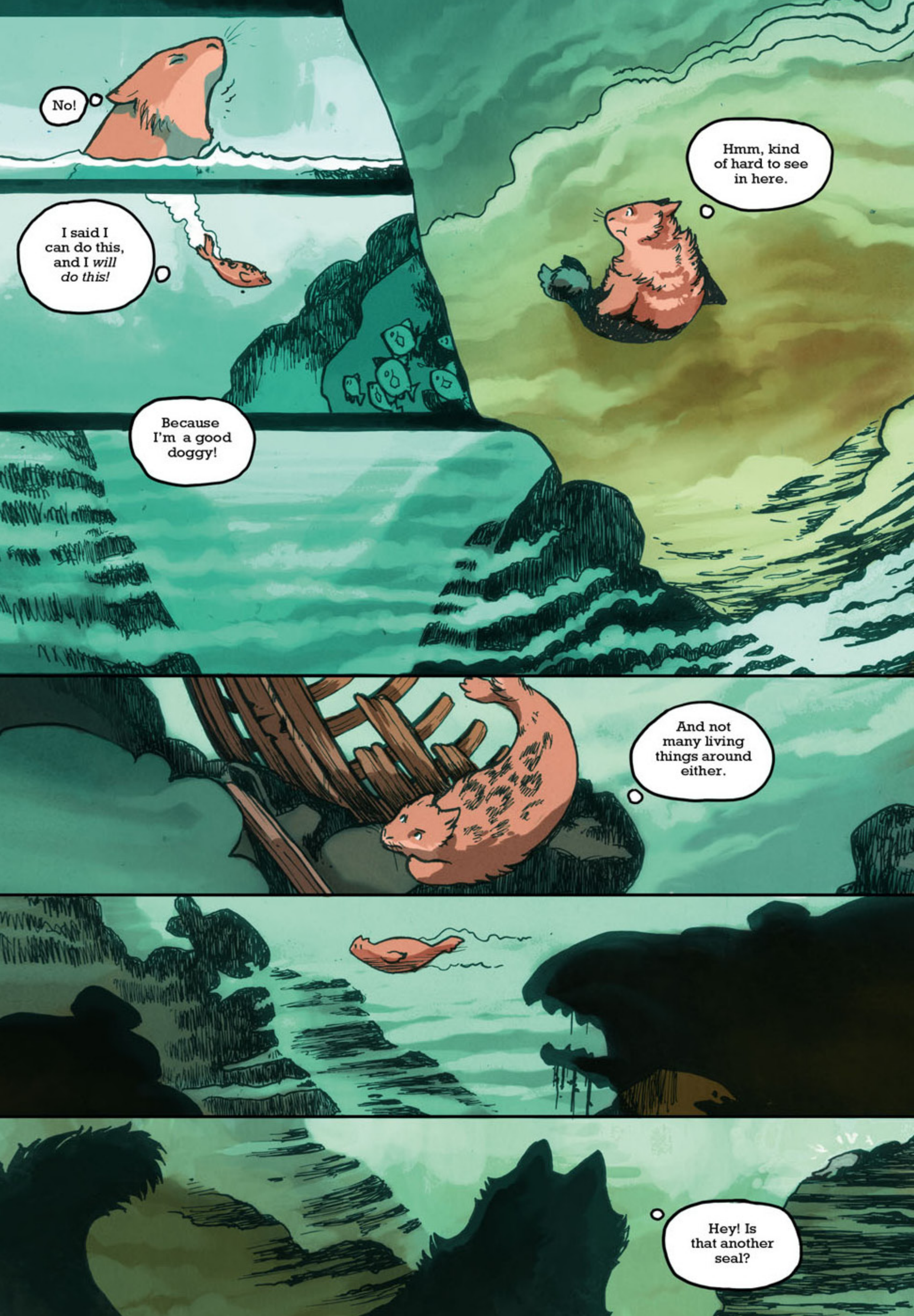

Regular seals swim through hoops all the time, and they're all idiots.
For you, it'll be like child's play.
You think so?
Sure.
Alright, let's try this.

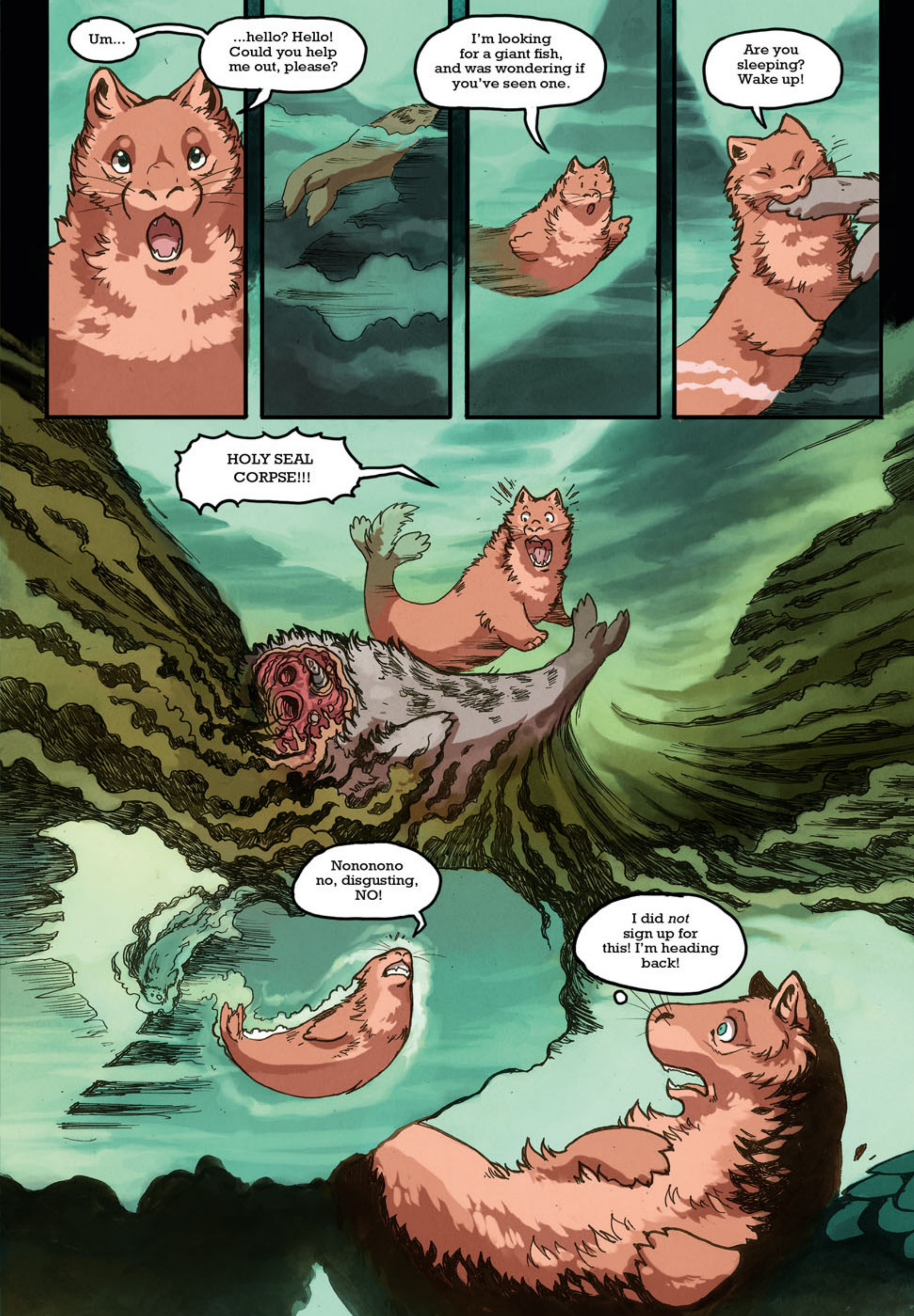

I did it! Did you see that? *Did you!?*
Yes! It was great, and you are amazing, but *please don't sink the boat!*
Heh, sorry.
I take it you're okay with the plan?
Yes! I know I can do it!
Am I a good doggy?
You're the *best* doggy.
And I'm going to take a nap.
Don't take a nap.
I *am* the best doggy.

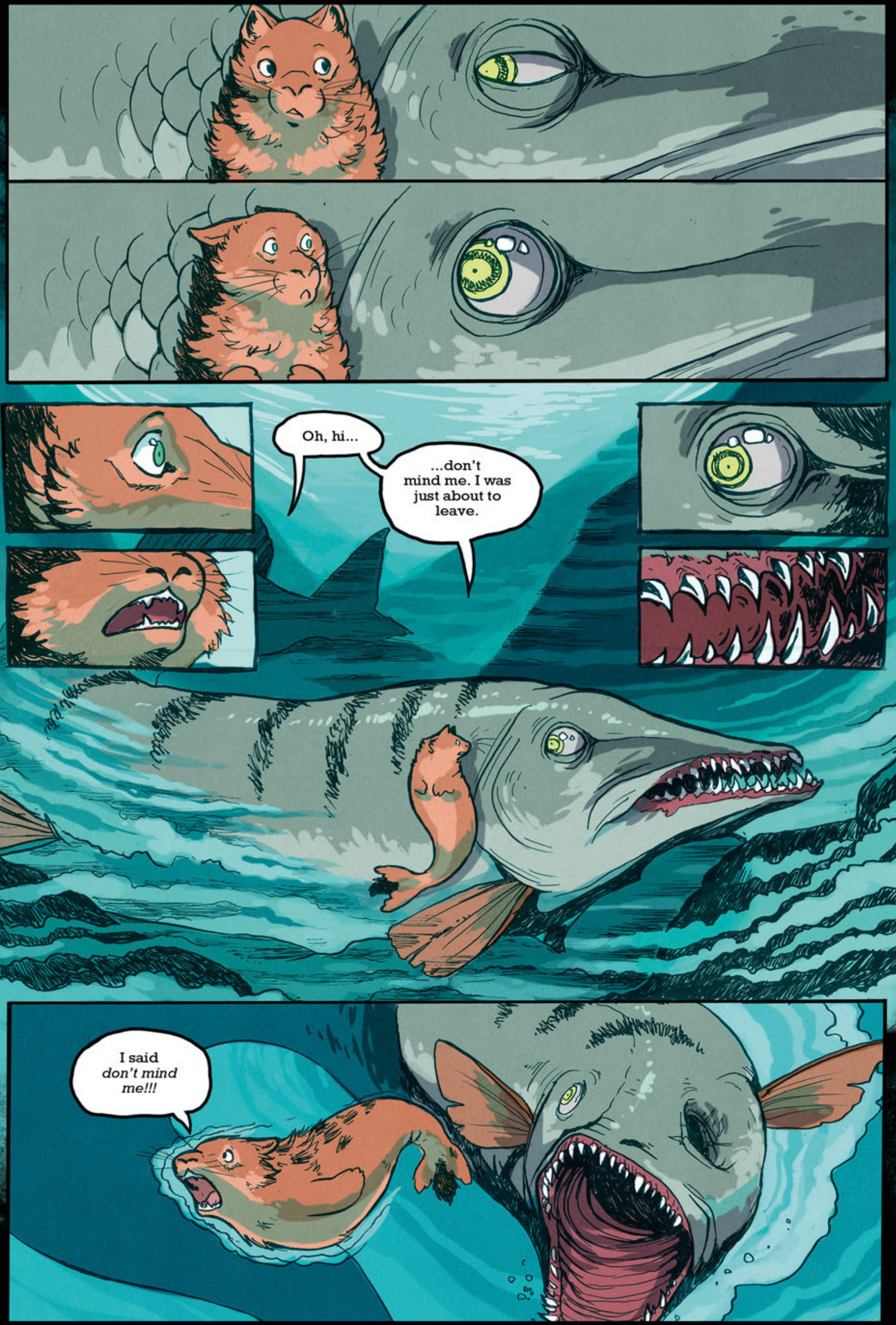

This is kind of difficult. Where do I start looking?
I don't even know what the monster fish smells like.
Now, let's see...
If *I* were a giant fish, where would I hide?

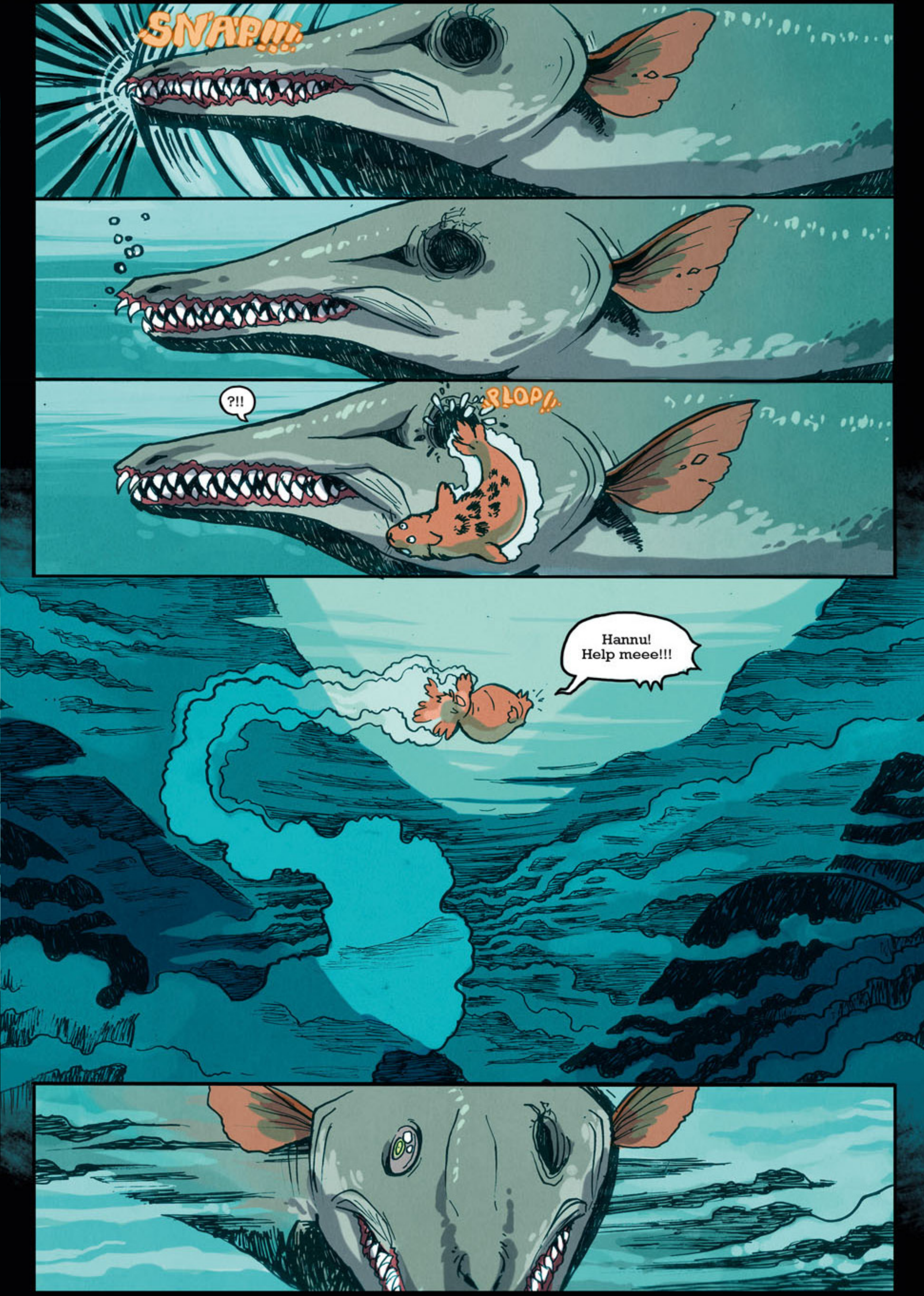

Maybe a snack will help me think.
Well, hello there, little friend.
!
Let's play tag!
!!!
What-
-what *is* that smell!??
It's like a *monkey fart!*

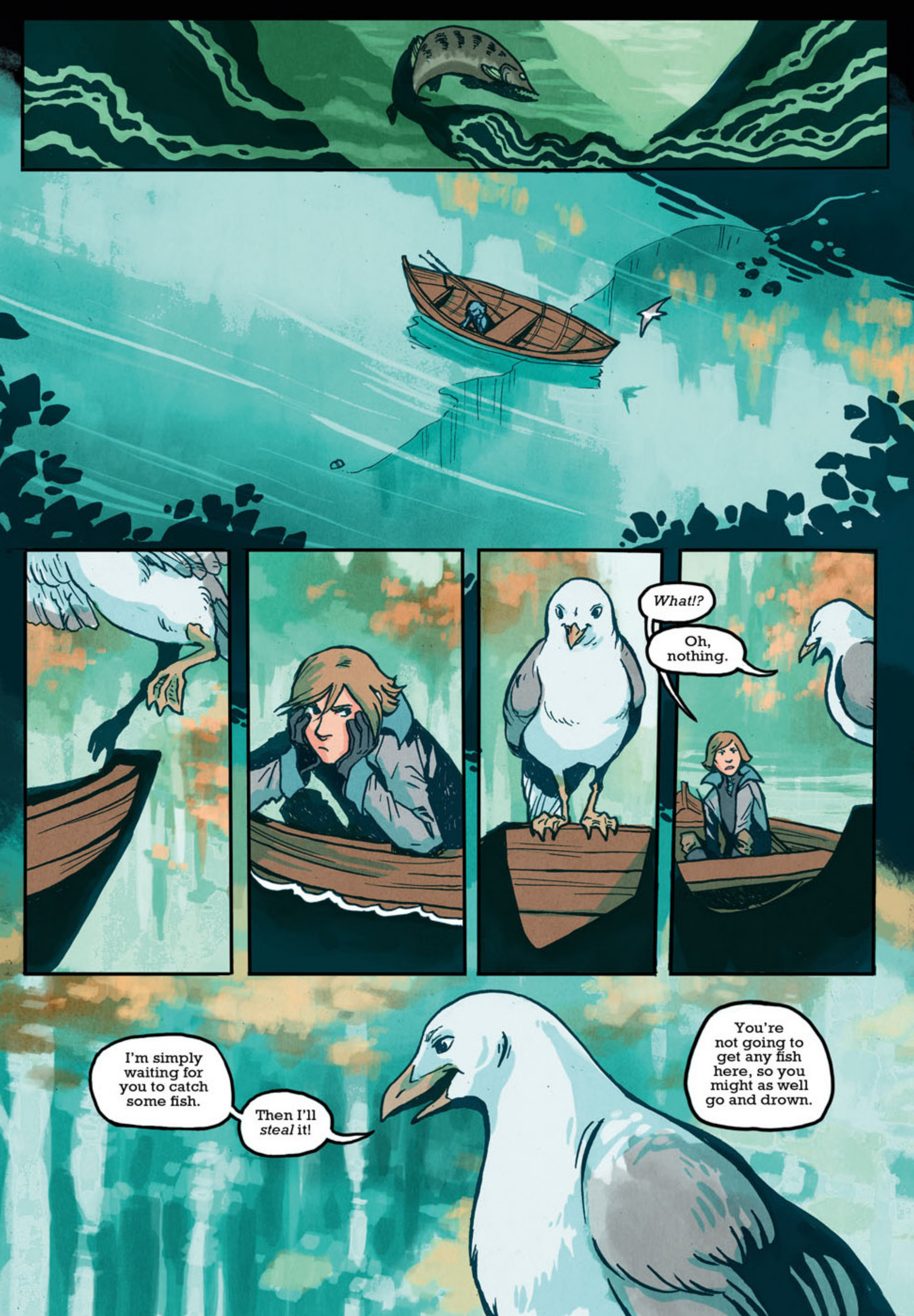

Ah! Didn't the small seal say that the fish smelled like a monkey fart?
This is it!
That is exactly the kind of place I would hide in if I were a giant fish!
Maybe I should go get Hannu, he could think of some other way to catch it.
Aww, I don't think I want to swim in there.

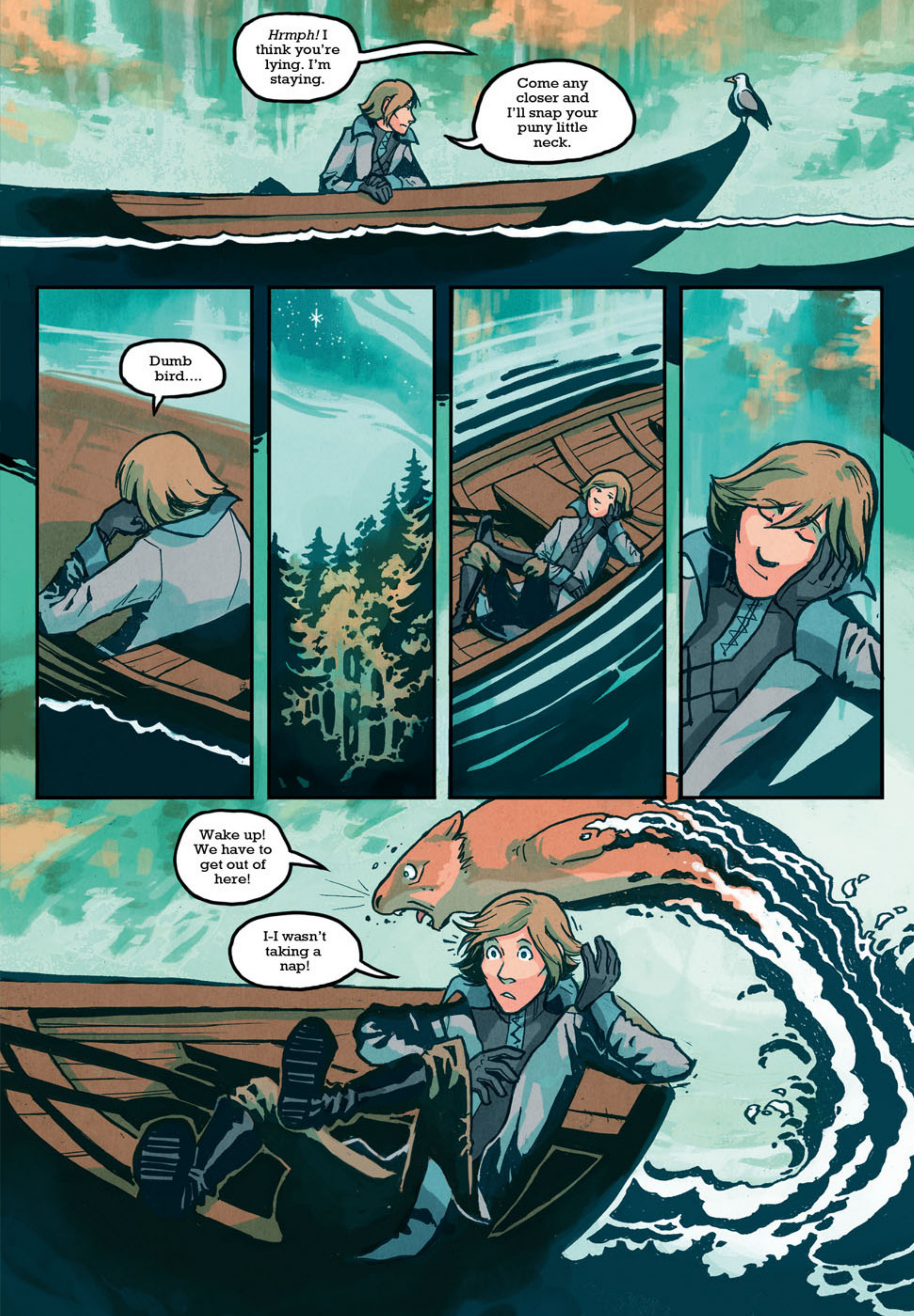

No!
I said I can do this, and I *will do this!*
Because I'm a good doggy!
Hmm, kind of hard to see in here.
And not many living things around either.
Hey! Is that another seal?

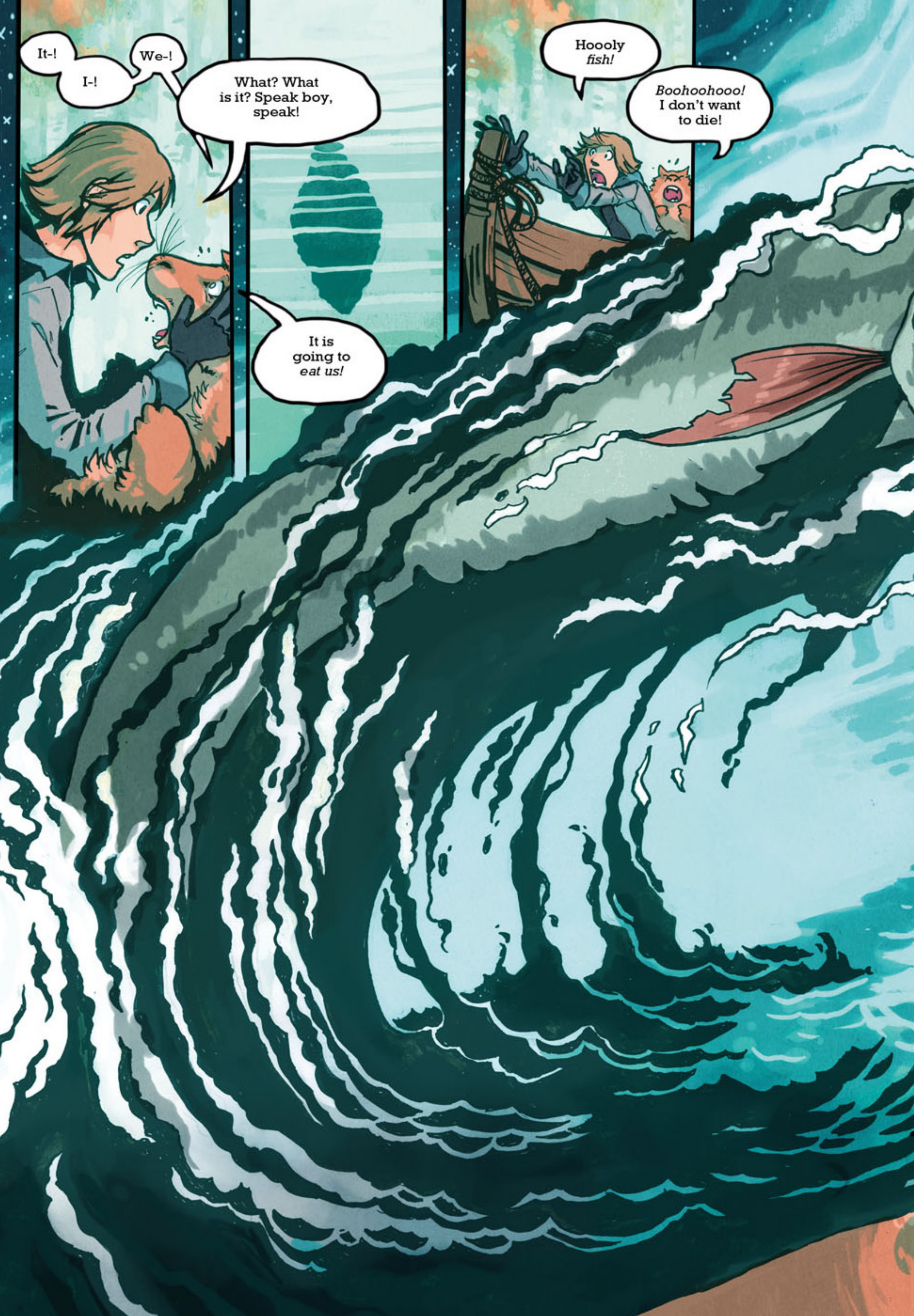

Um...
...hello? Hello! Could you help me out, please?
I'm looking for a giant fish, and was wondering if you've seen one.
Are you sleeping? Wake up!
HOLY SEAL CORPSE!!!
Nononono no, disgusting, NO!
I did *not* sign up for this! I'm heading back!

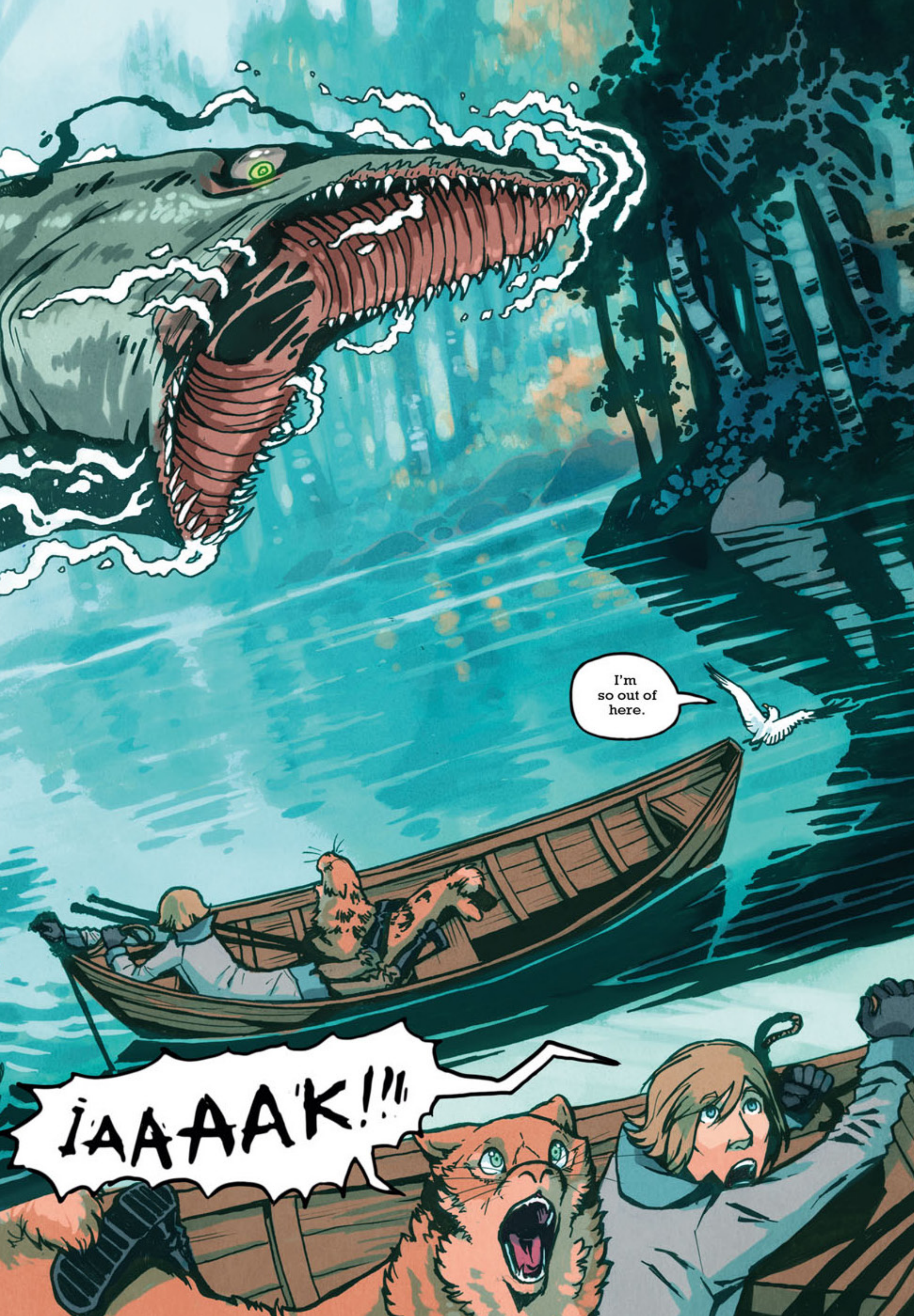

Oh, hi...
...don't mind me. I was just about to leave.
I said *don't mind me!!!*

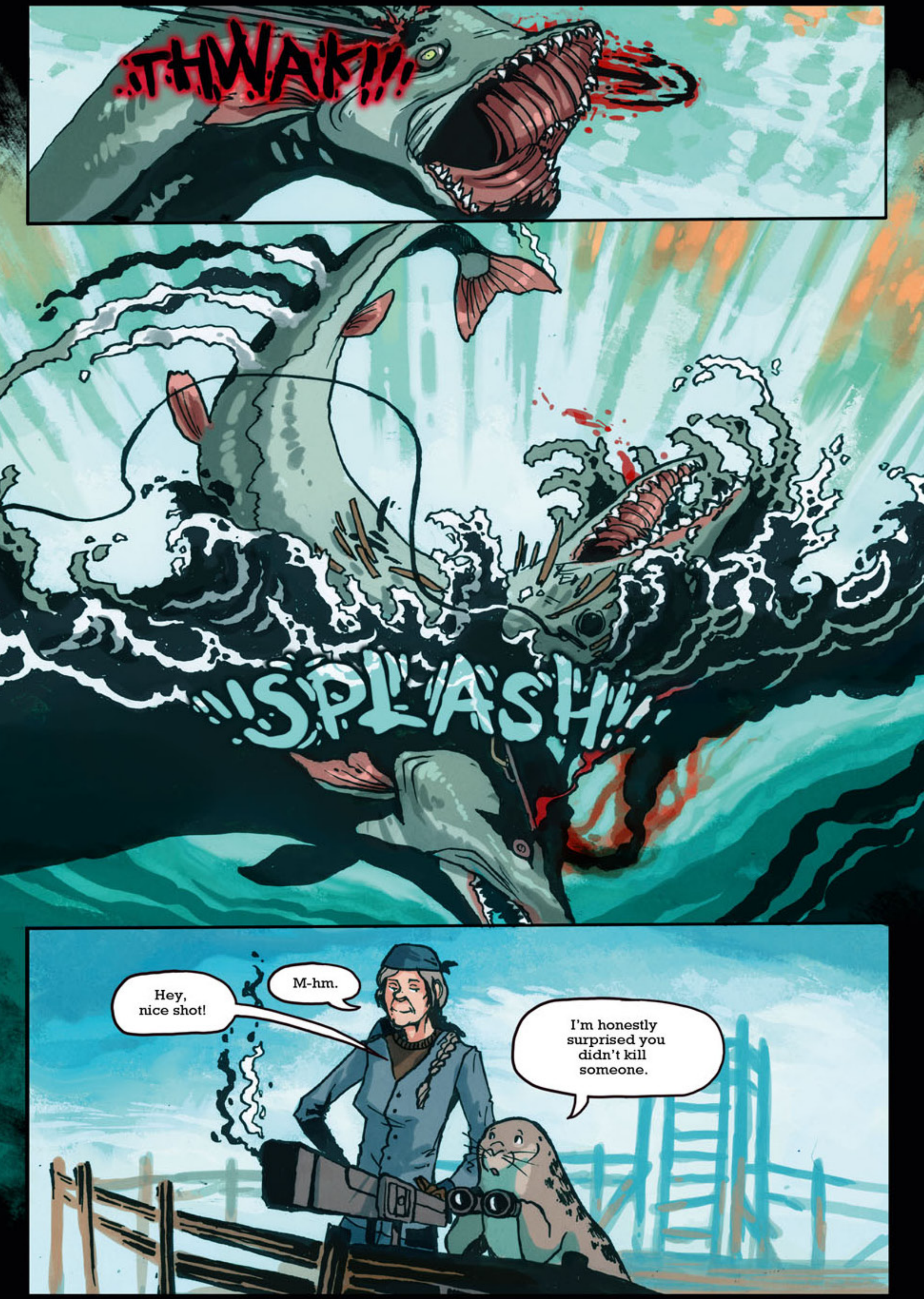

SNAP!!!
?!!
PLOP!!
Hannu! Help meee!!!

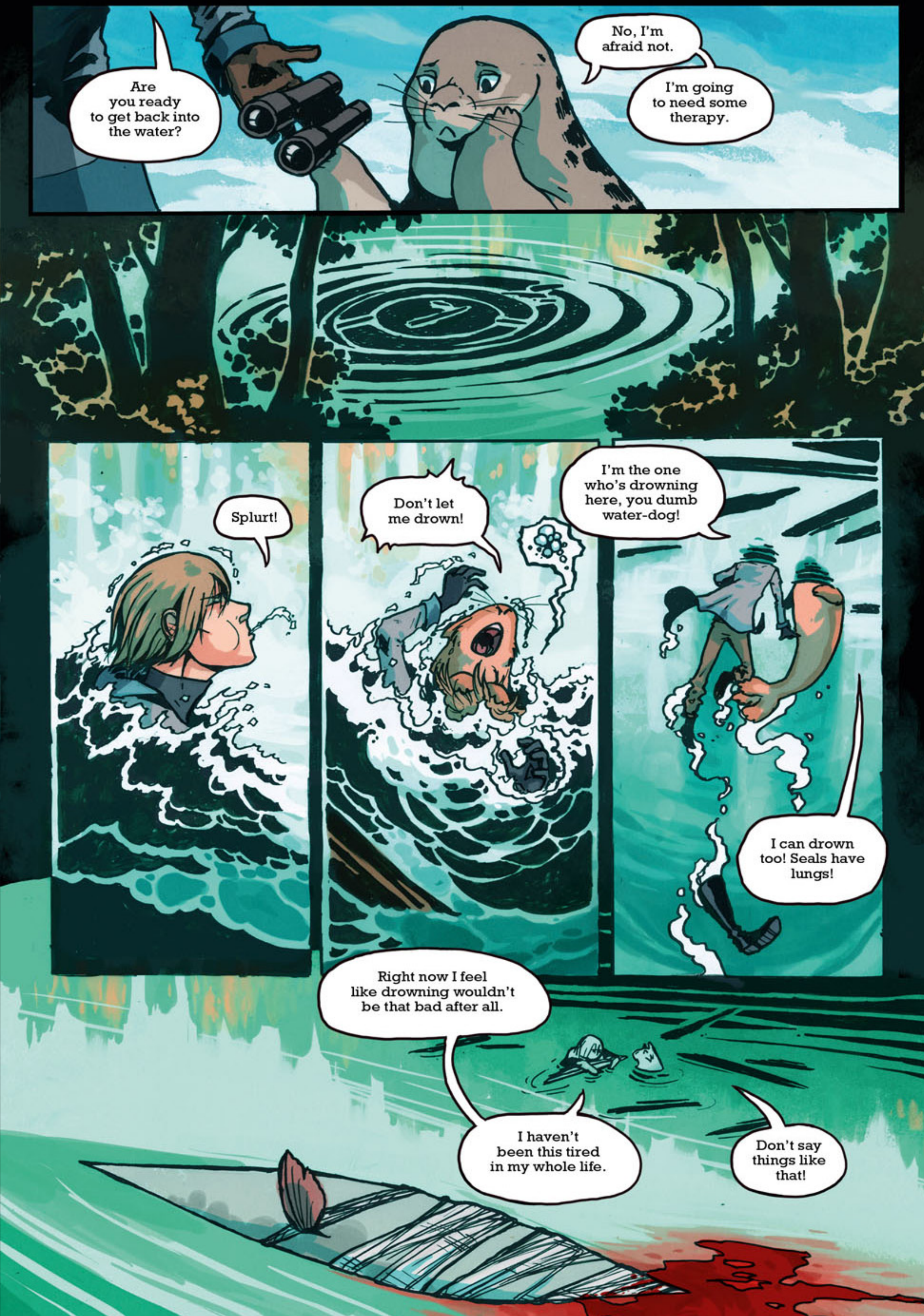

What!?
Oh, nothing.
I'm simply waiting for you to catch some fish.
Then I'll *steal* it!
You're not going to get any fish here, so you might as well go and drown.

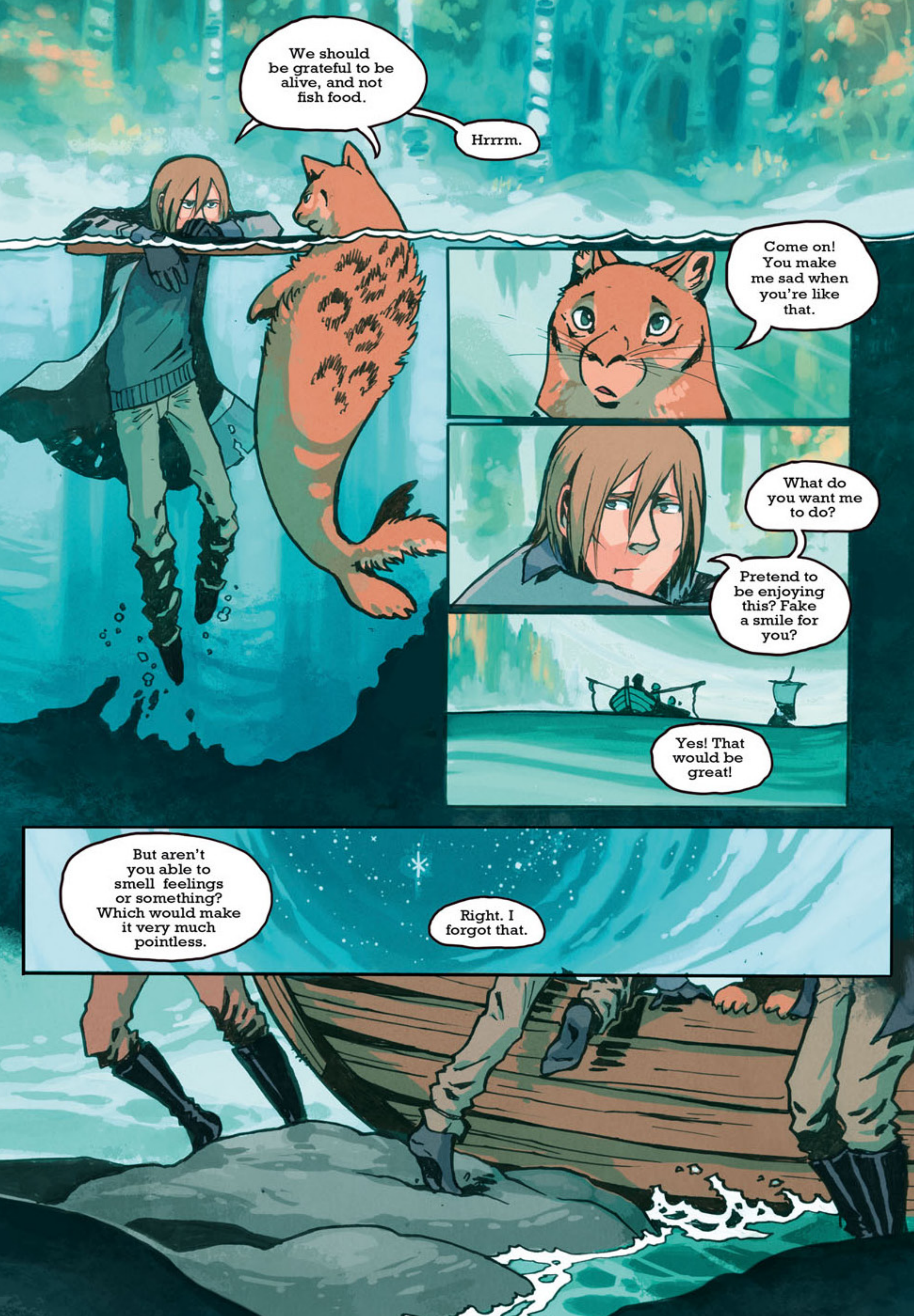

Hrmph! I think you're lying. I'm staying.
Come any closer and I'll snap your puny little neck.
Dumb bird....
Wake up! We have to get out of here!
I-I wasn't taking a nap!

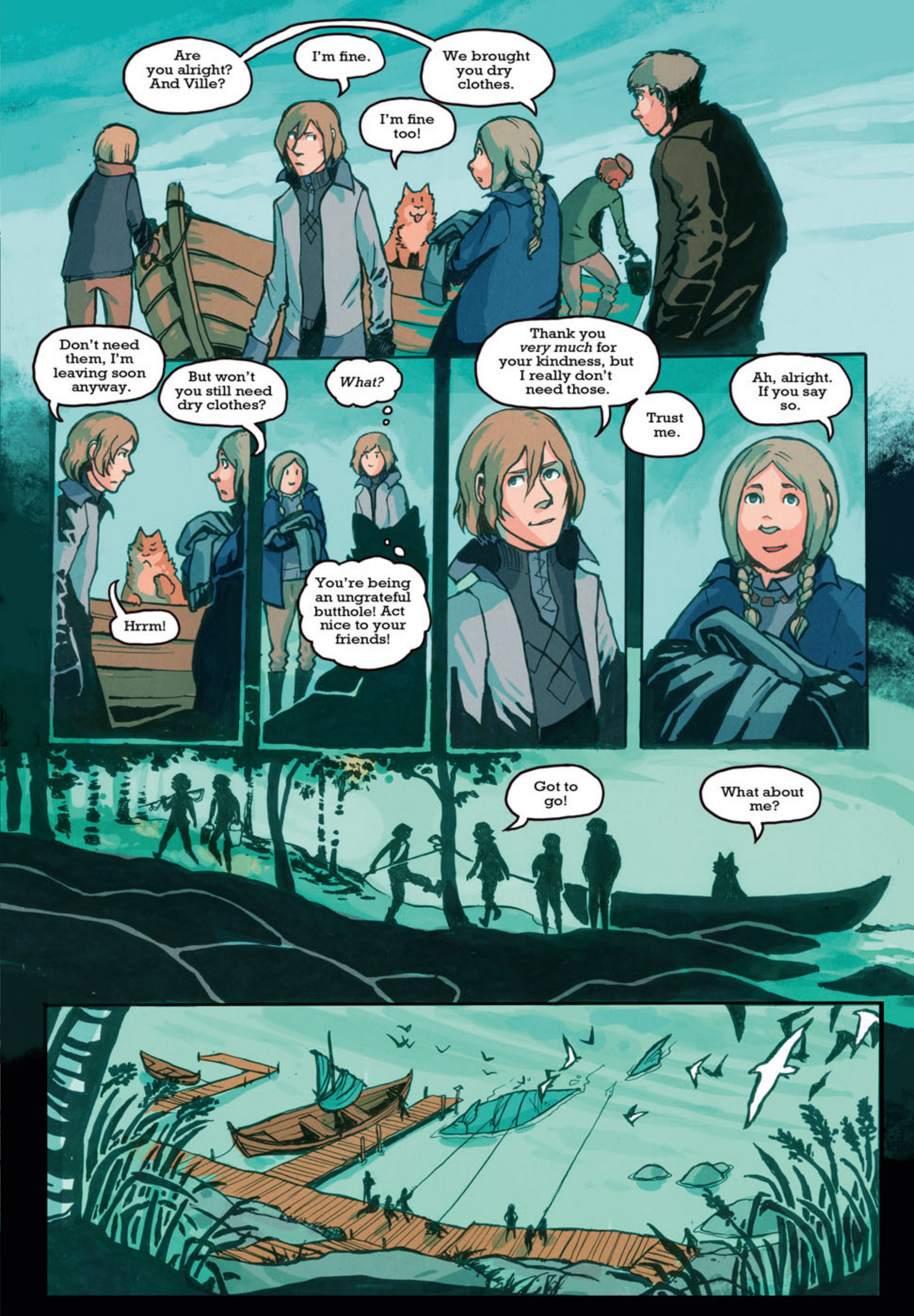

It-!
I-!
We-!
What? What is it? Speak boy, speak!
It is going to *eat us!*
Hoooly *fish!*
Boohoohooo! I don't want to die!

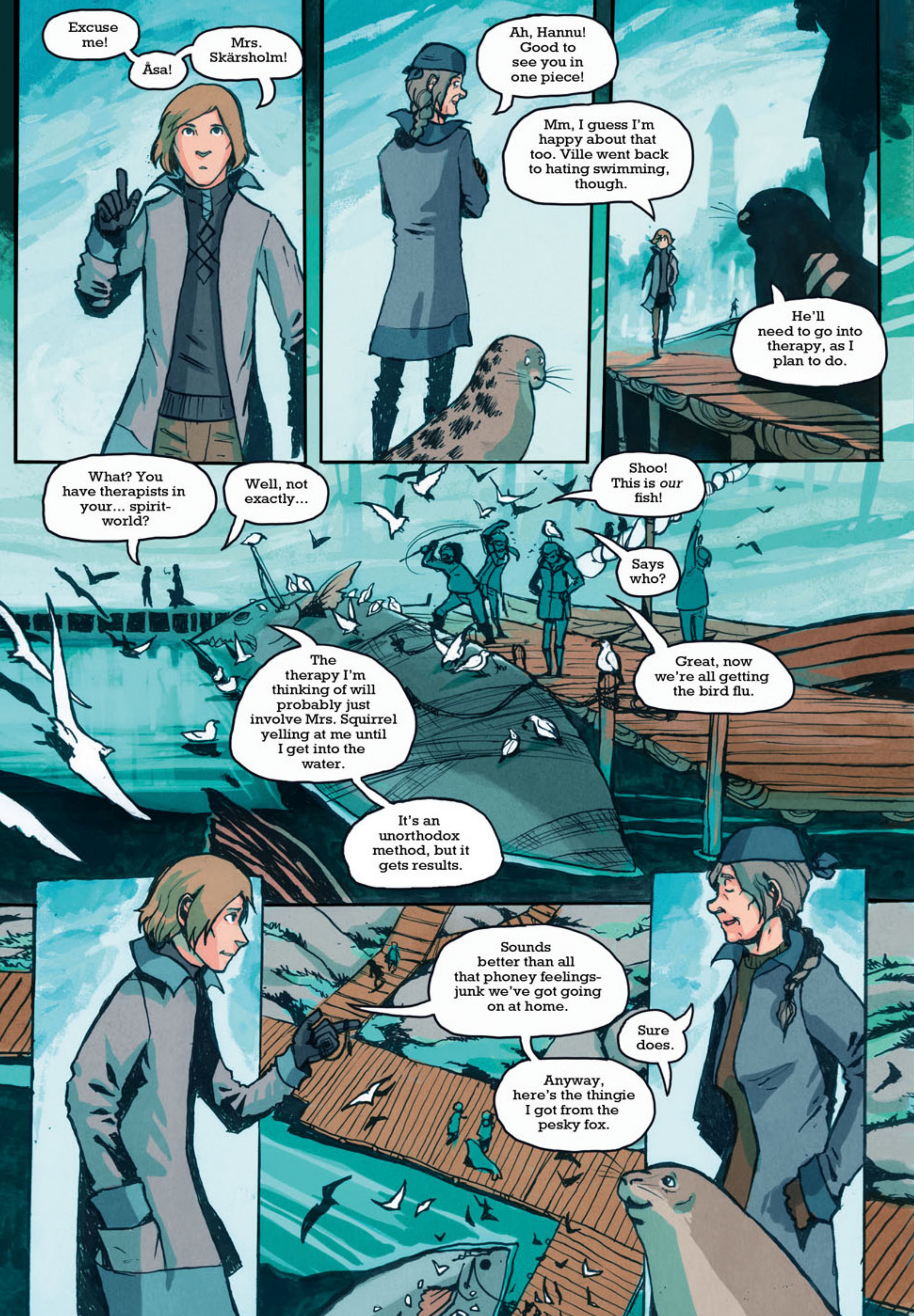

I'm so out of here.
¡AAAAK!!!

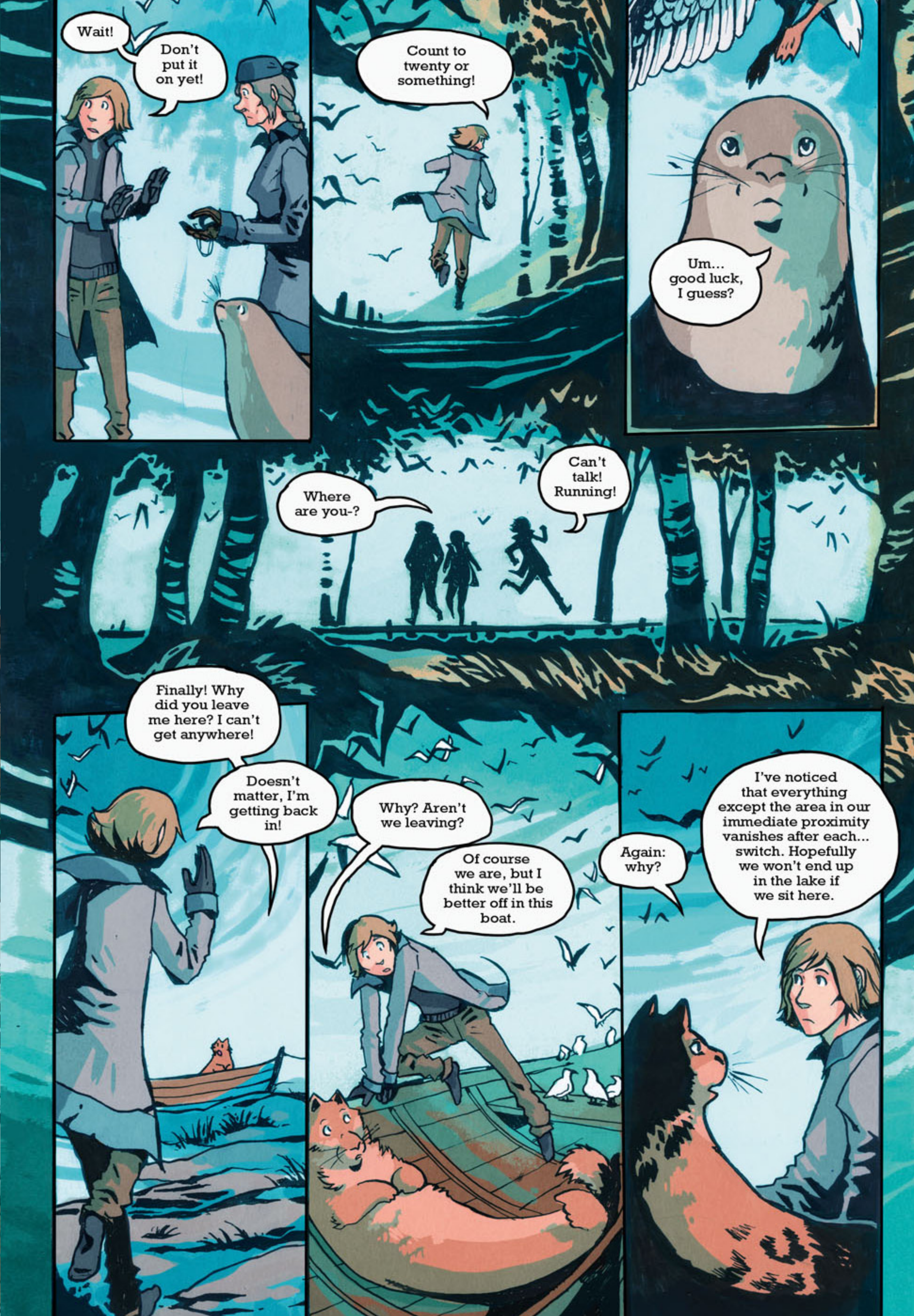

THWAK!!
SPLASH!
Hey, nice shot!
M-hm.
I'm honestly surprised you didn't kill someone.

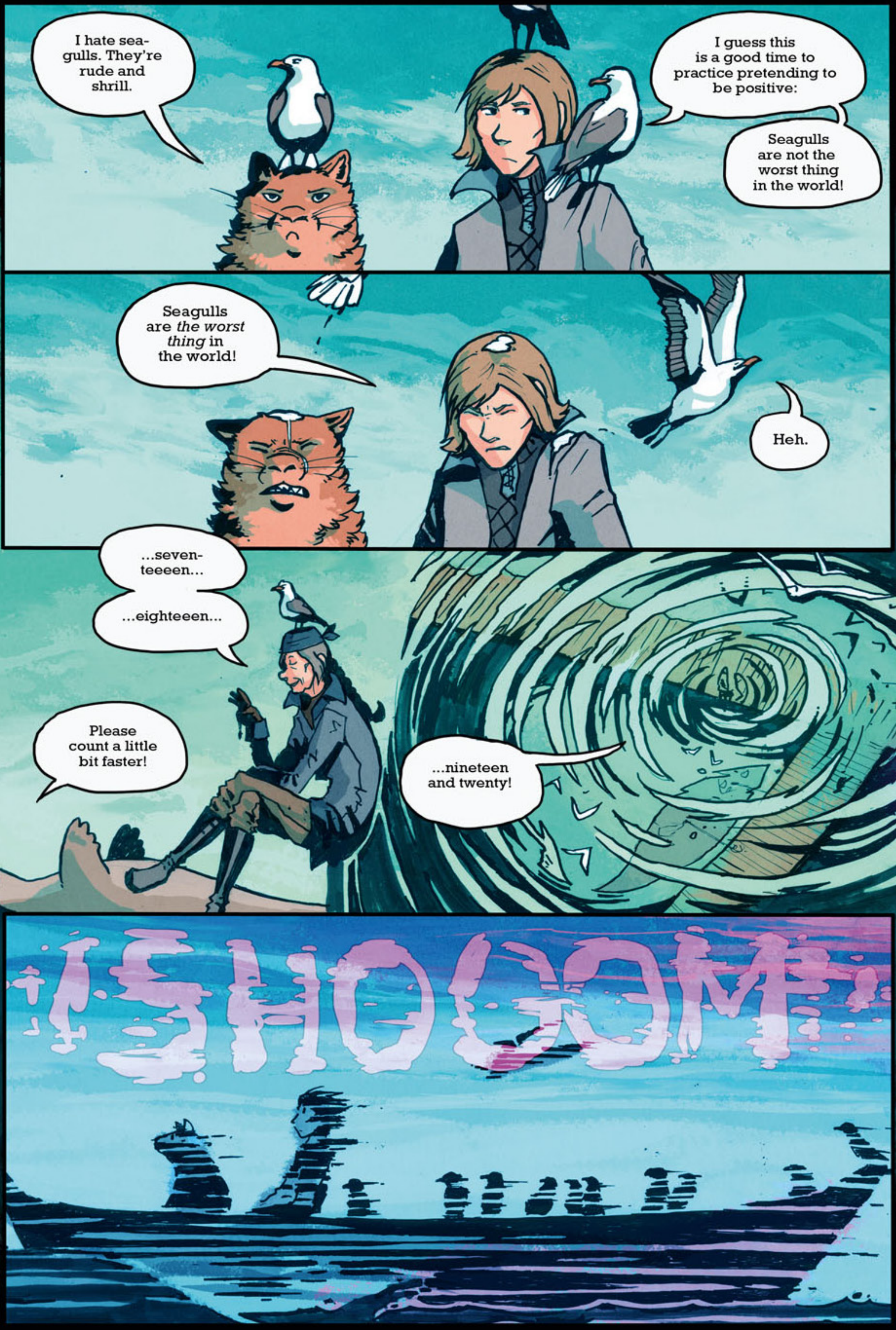

Are you ready to get back into the water?
No, I'm afraid not.
I'm going to need some therapy.
Splurt!
Don't let me drown!
I'm the one who's drowning here, you dumb water-dog!
I can drown too! Seals have lungs!
Right now I feel like drowning wouldn't be that bad after all.
I haven't been this tired in my whole life.
Don't say things like that!

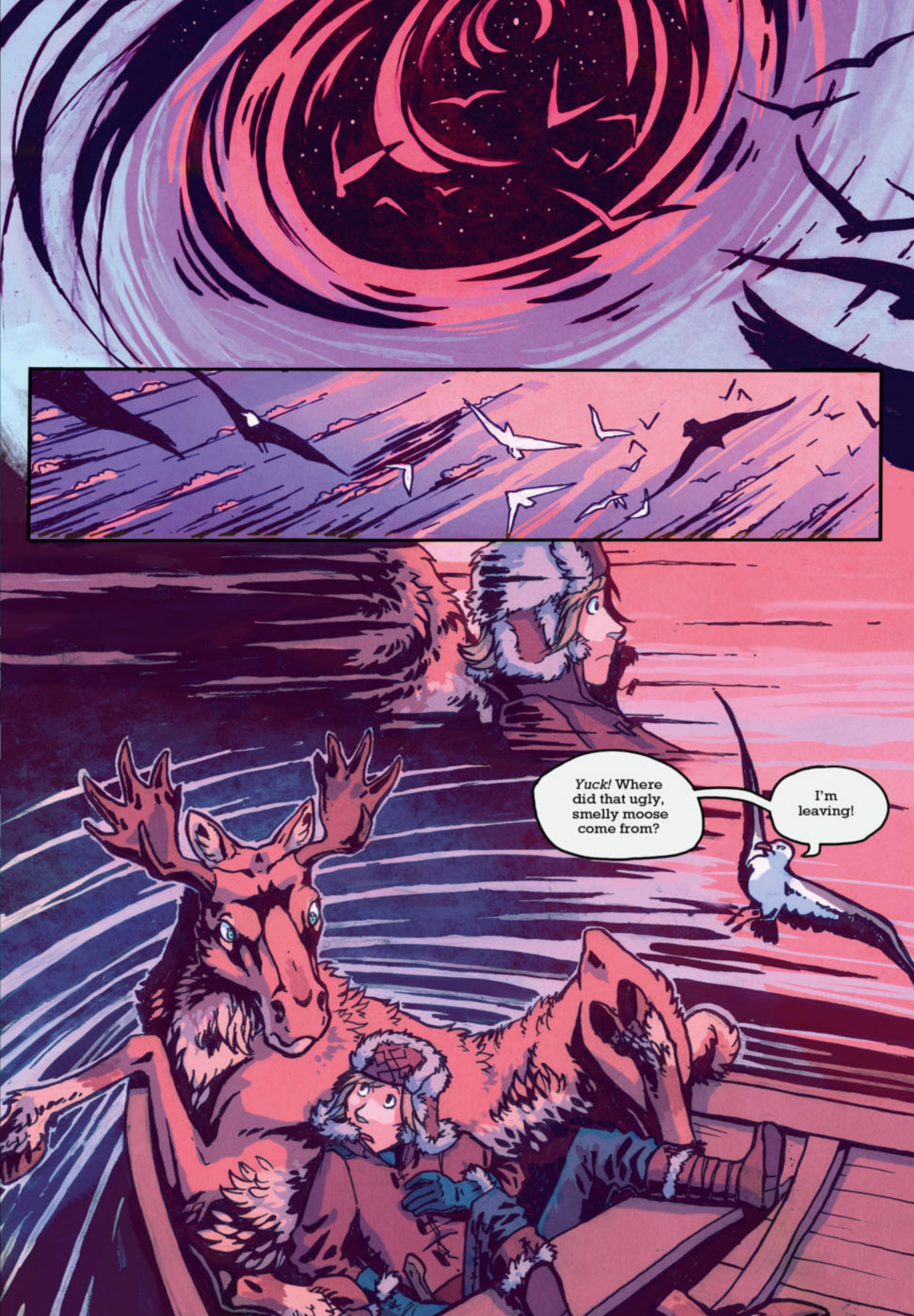

We should be grateful to be alive, and not fish food.
Hrrrm.
Come on! You make me sad when you're like that.
What do you want me to do?
Pretend to be enjoying this? Fake a smile for you?
Yes! That would be great!
But aren't you able to smell feelings or something? Which would make it very much pointless.
Right. I forgot that.


Are you alright? And Ville?
I'm fine.
We brought you dry clothes.
I'm fine too!
Don't need them, I'm leaving soon anyway.
But won't you still need dry clothes?
Hrrm!
What?
You're being an ungrateful butthole! Act nice to your friends!
Thank you *very much* for your kindness, but I really don't need those.
Trust me.
Ah, alright. If you say so.
Got to go!
What about me?

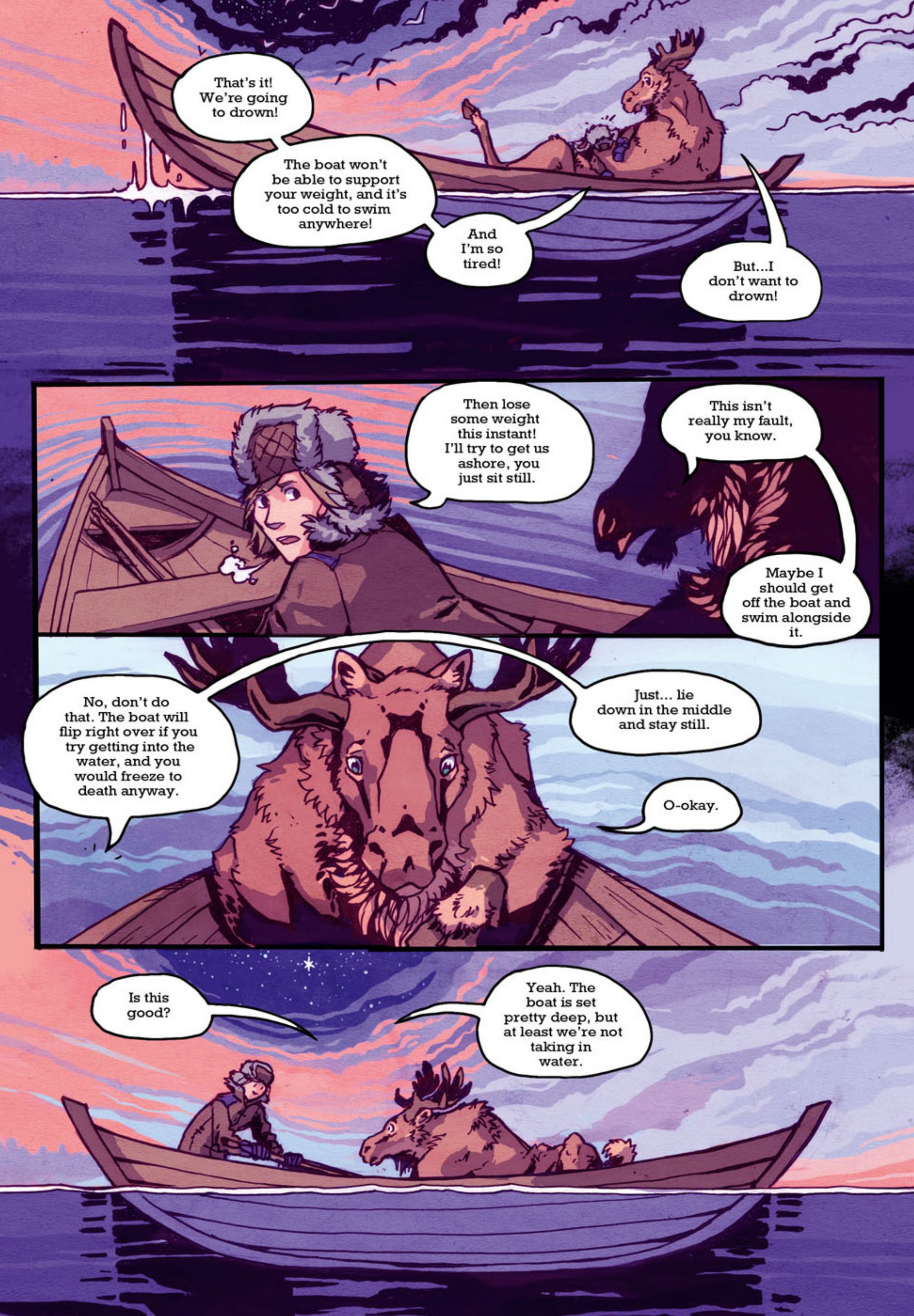

Excuse me!
Åsa!
Mrs. Skärsholm!
Ah, Hannu! Good to see you in one piece!
Mm, I guess I'm happy about that too. Ville went back to hating swimming, though.
He'll need to go into therapy, as I plan to do.
What? You have therapists in your... spirit-world?
Well, not exactly...
The therapy I'm thinking of will probably just involve Mrs. Squirrel yelling at me until I get into the water.
It's an unorthodox method, but it gets results.
Shoo! This is *our* fish!
Says who?
Great, now we're all getting the bird flu.
Sounds better than all that phoney feelings-junk we've got going on at home.
Sure does.
Anyway, here's the thingie I got from the pesky fox.

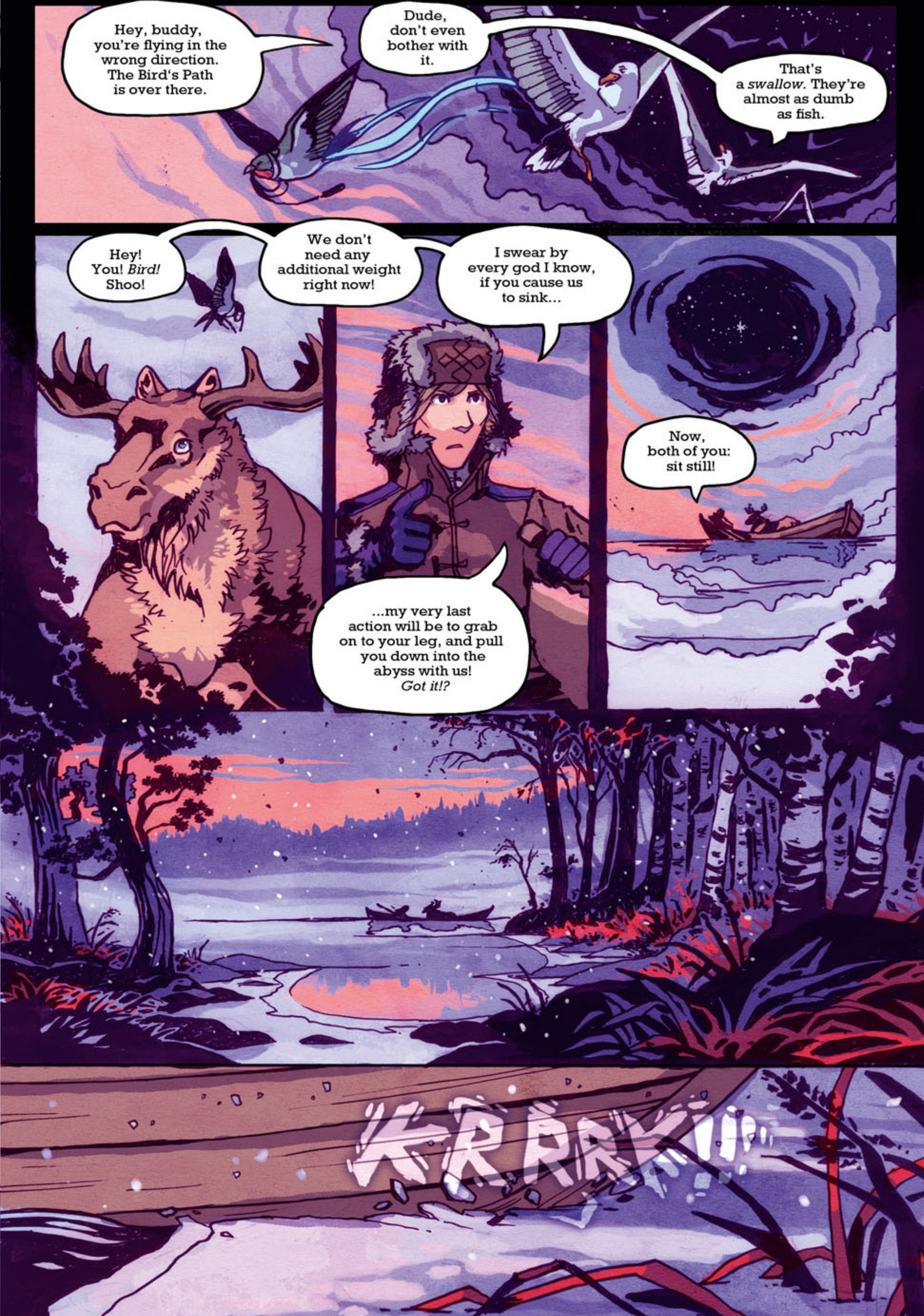

Wait!
Don't put it on yet!
Count to twenty or something!
Um... good luck, I guess?
Where are you-?
Can't talk! Running!
Finally! Why did you leave me here? I can't get anywhere!
Doesn't matter, I'm getting back in!
Why? Aren't we leaving?
Of course we are, but I think we'll be better off in this boat.
Again: why?
I've noticed that everything except the area in our immediate proximity vanishes after each... switch. Hopefully we won't end up in the lake if we sit here.

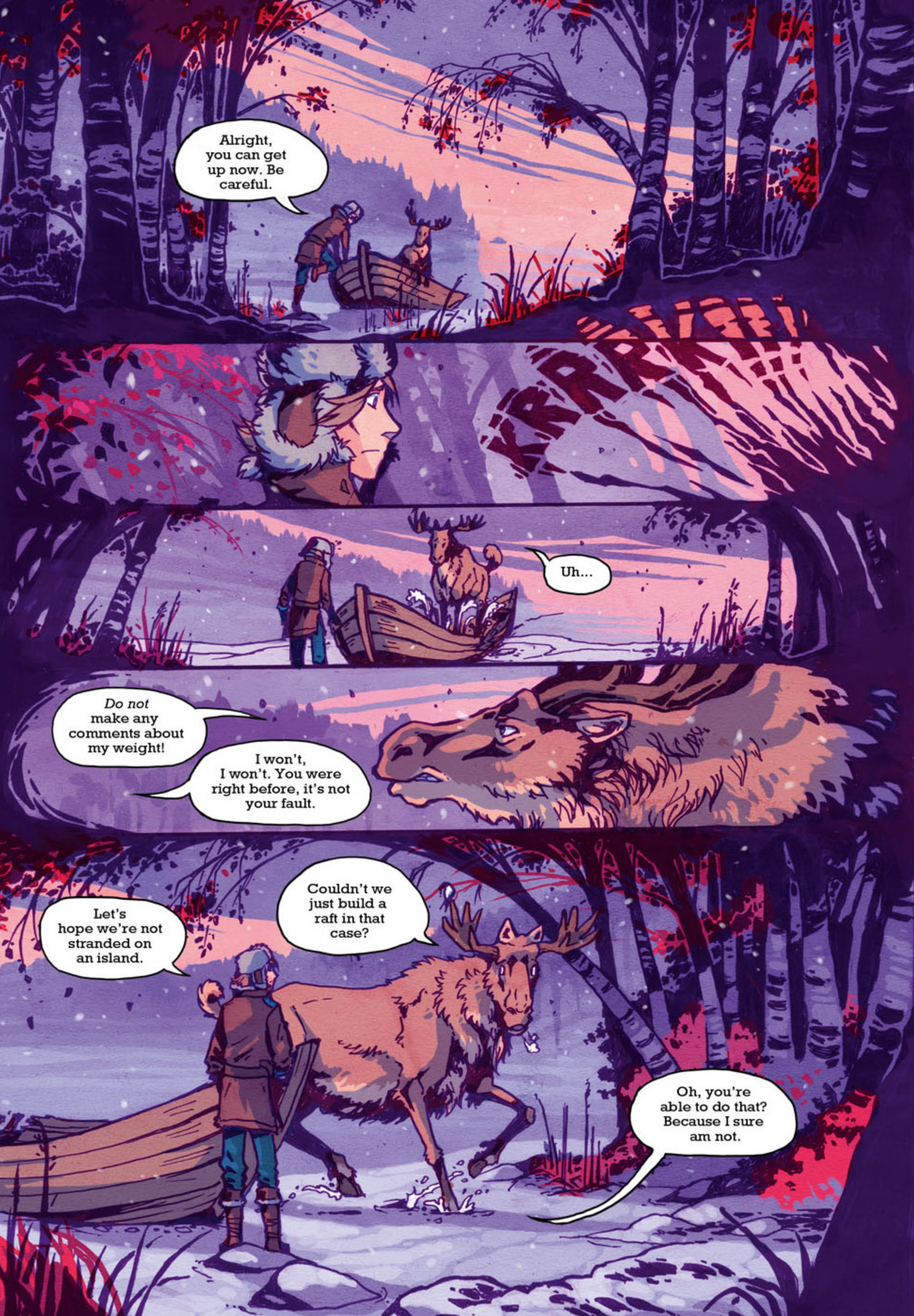

I hate seagulls. They're rude and shrill.
I guess this is a good time to practice pretending to be positive:
Seagulls are not the worst thing in the world!
Seagulls are *the worst thing* in the world!
Heh.
...seventeeeen...
...eighteeen...
Please count a little bit faster!
...nineteen and twenty!
!SHOOOM!

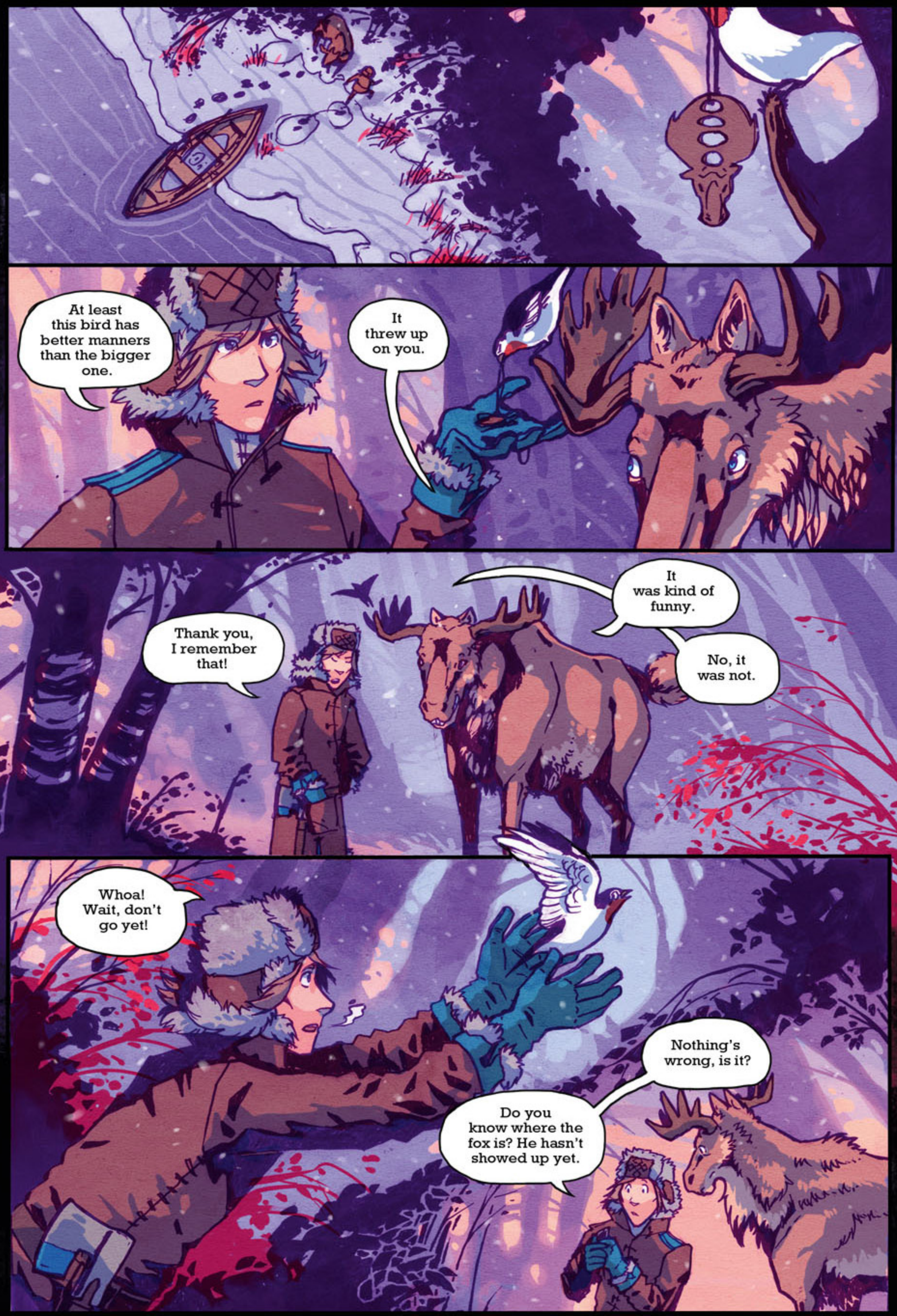

Yuck! Where did that ugly, smelly moose come from?
I'm leaving!

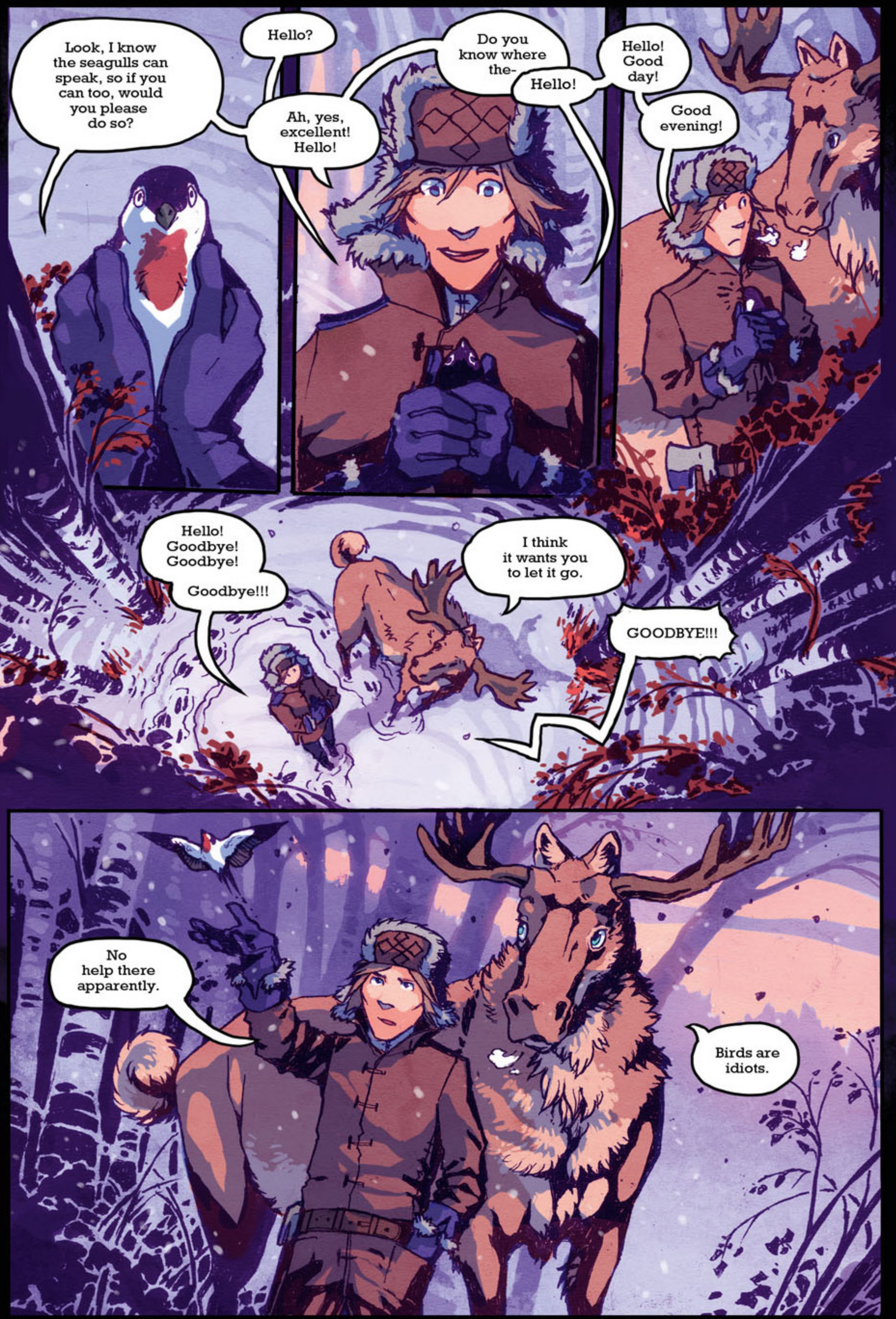
A Redtail's Dream

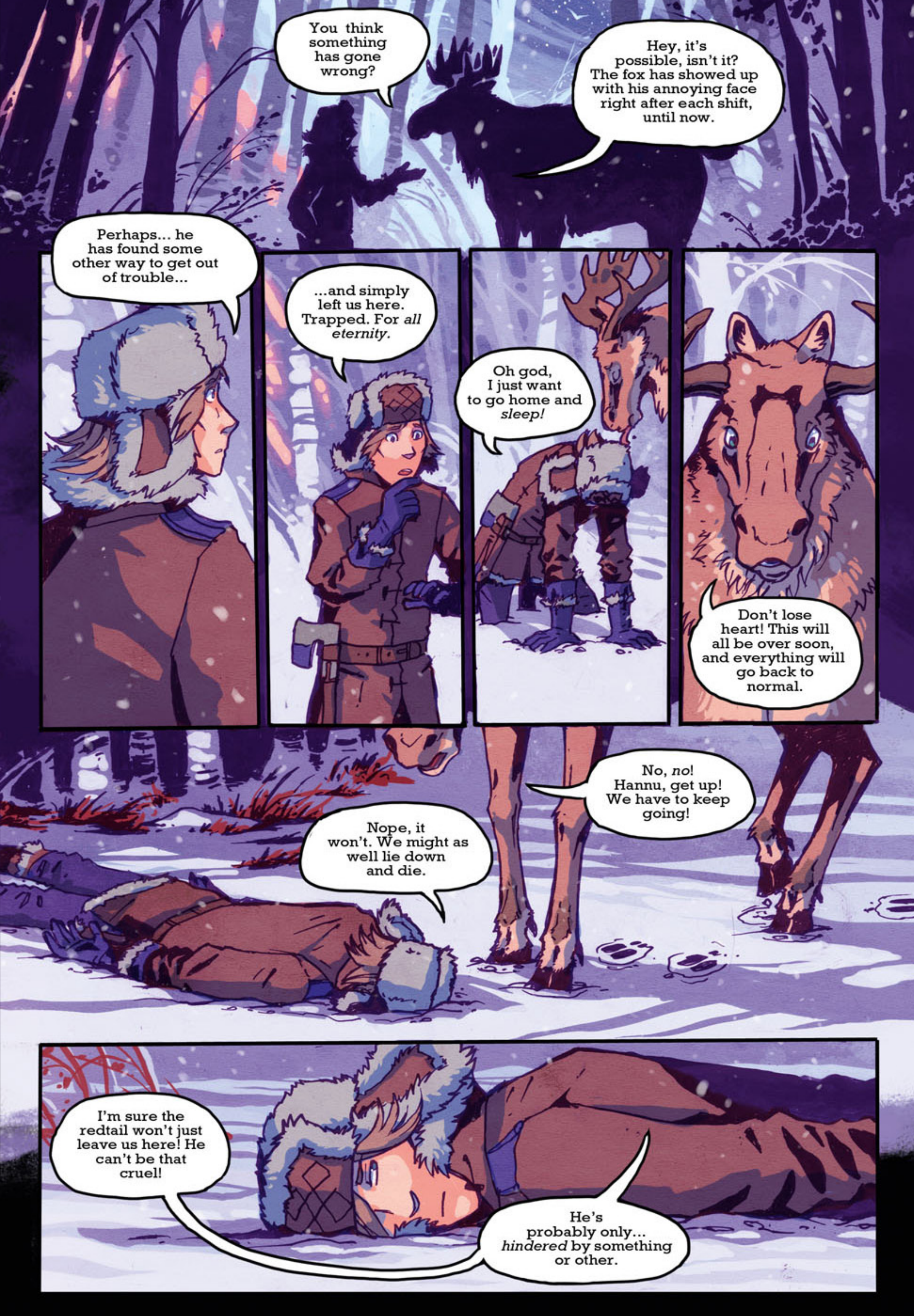

That's it! We're going to drown!
The boat won't be able to support your weight, and it's too cold to swim anywhere!
And I'm so tired!
But...I don't want to drown!
Then lose some weight this instant! I'll try to get us ashore, you just sit still.
This isn't really my fault, you know.
Maybe I should get off the boat and swim alongside it.
No, don't do that. The boat will flip right over if you try getting into the water, and you would freeze to death anyway.
Just... lie down in the middle and stay still.
O-okay.
Is this good?
Yeah. The boat is set pretty deep, but at least we're not taking in water.

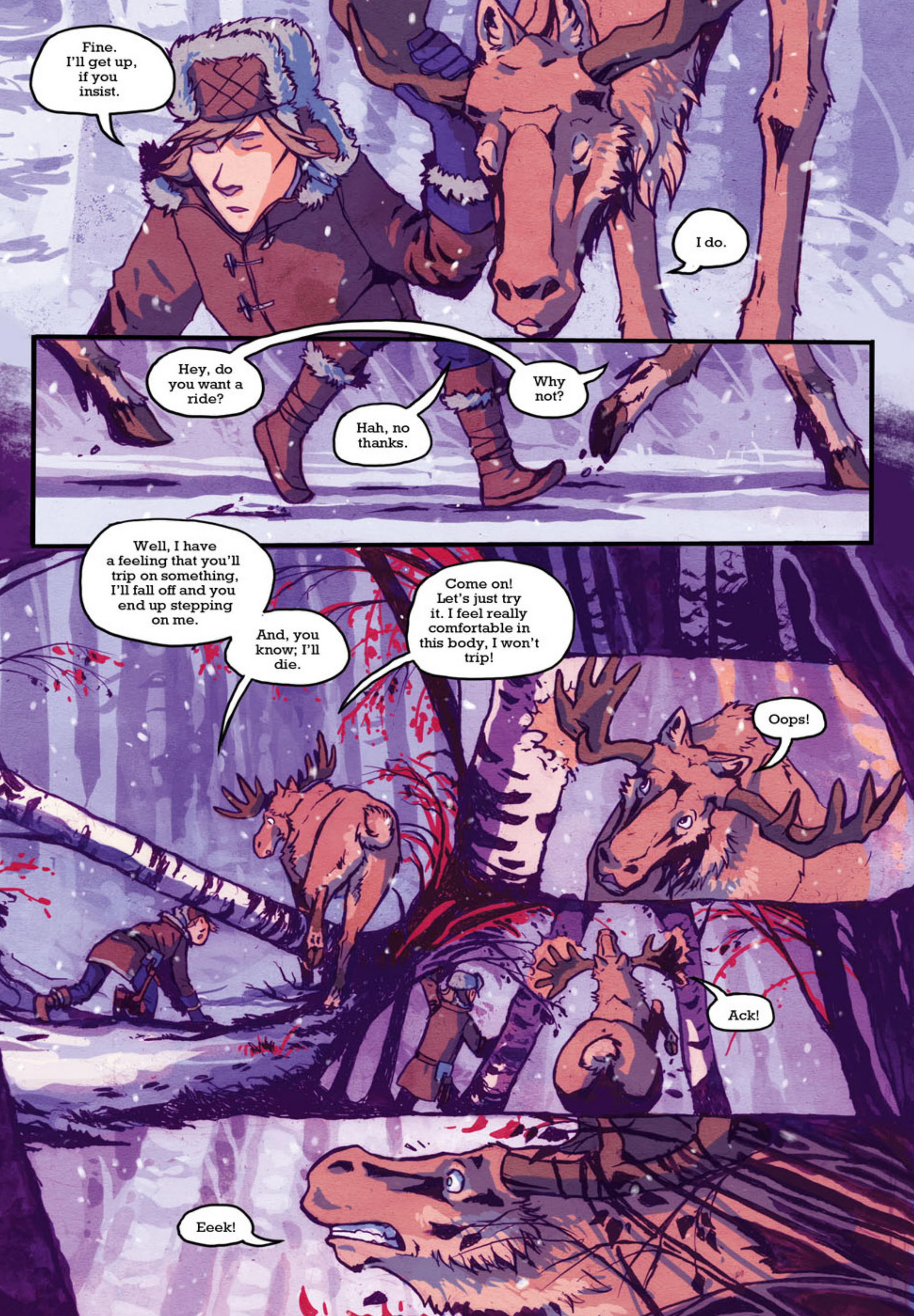

Hey, buddy, you're flying in the wrong direction. The Bird's Path is over there.
Dude, don't even bother with it.
That's a *swallow*. They're almost as dumb as fish.
Hey! You! *Bird!* Shoo!
We don't need any additional weight right now!
I swear by every god I know, if you cause us to sink...
...my very last action will be to grab on to your leg, and pull you down into the abyss with us! *Got it!?*
Now, both of you: sit still!
KRRRK!!

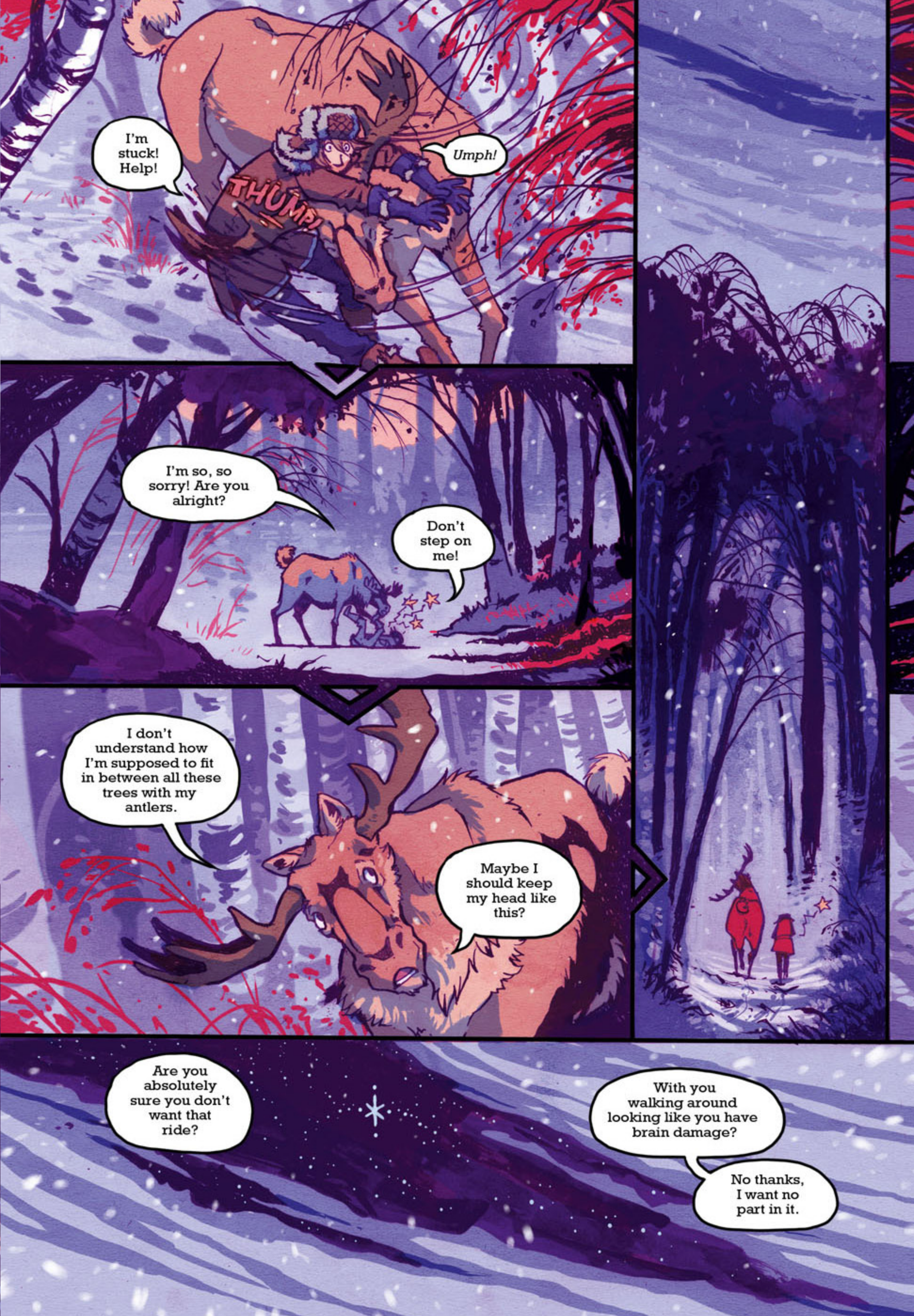

Alright, you can get up now. Be careful.
KRRRZZZ!
Uh...
Do not make any comments about my weight!
I won't, I won't. You were right before, it's not your fault.
Let's hope we're not stranded on an island.
Couldn't we just build a raft in that case?
Oh, you're able to do that? Because I sure am not.

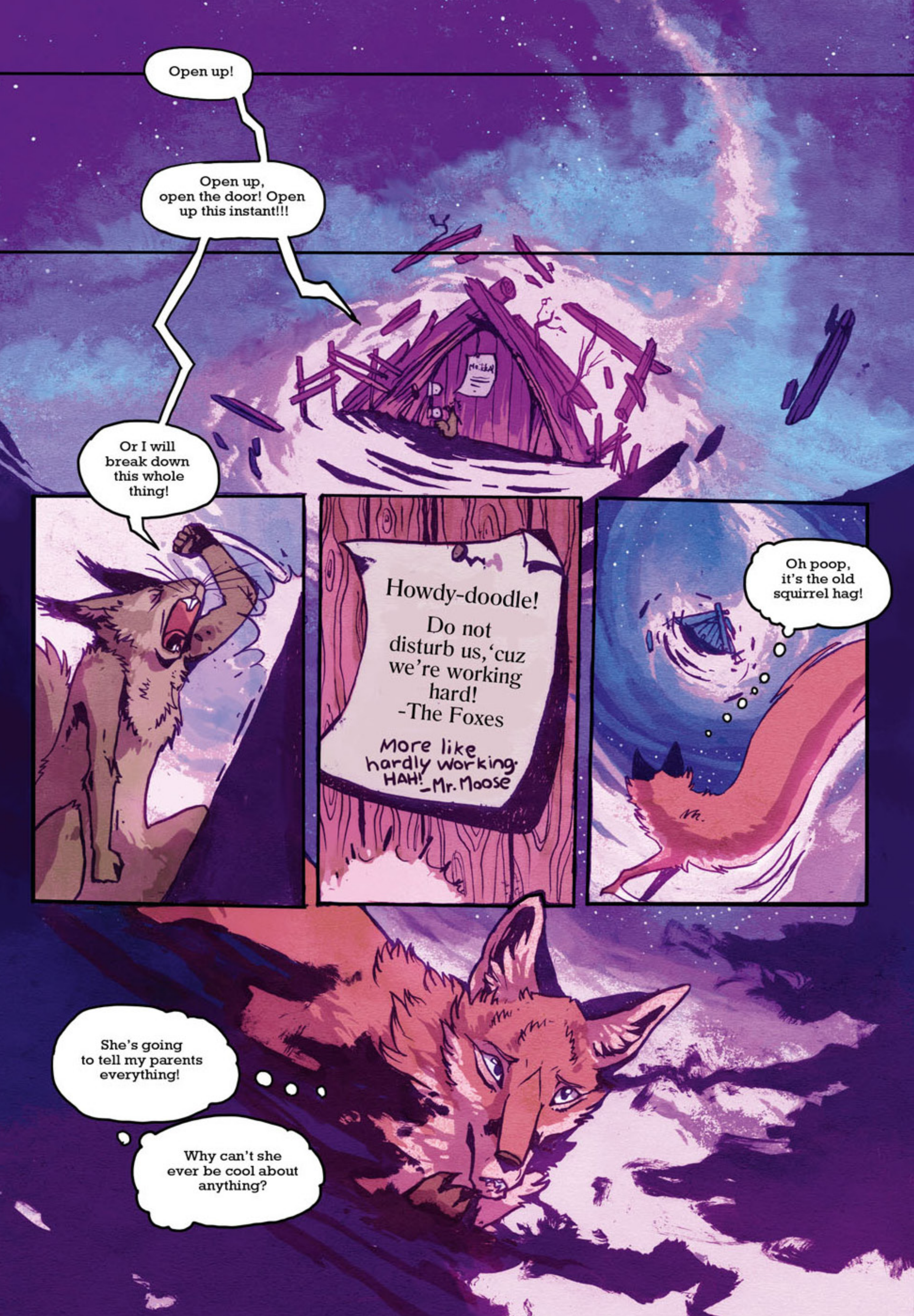

At least this bird has better manners than the bigger one.
It threw up on you.
Thank you, I remember that!
It was kind of funny.
No, it was not.
Whoa! Wait, don't go yet!
Nothing's wrong, is it?
Do you know where the fox is? He hasn't showed up yet.

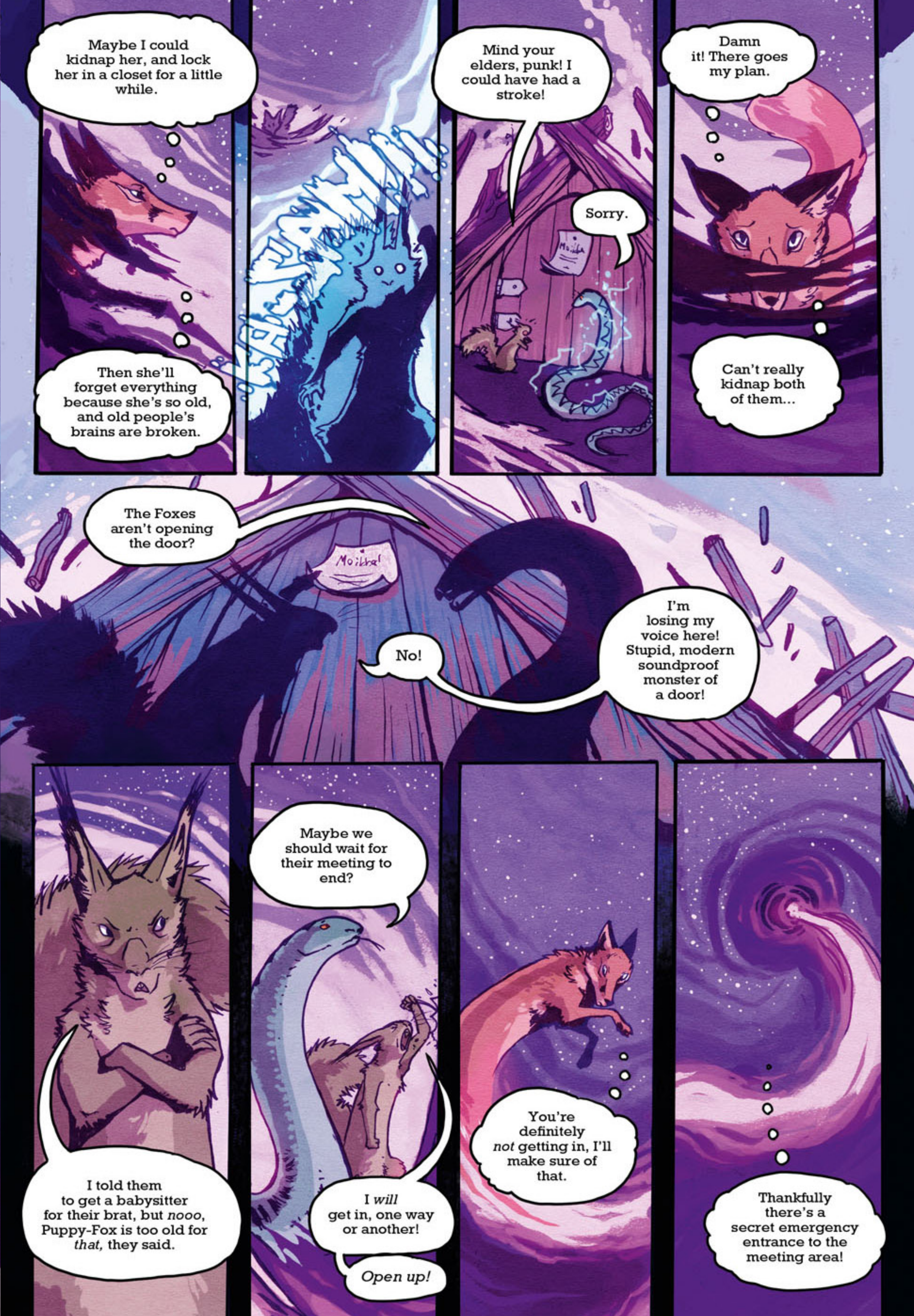

Look, I know the seagulls can speak, so if you can too, would you please do so?
Hello?
Ah, yes, excellent! Hello!
Do you know where the-
Hello!
Hello! Good day!
Good evening!
Hello! Goodbye! Goodbye!
Goodbye!!!
I think it wants you to let it go.
GOODBYE!!!
No help there apparently.
Birds are idiots.

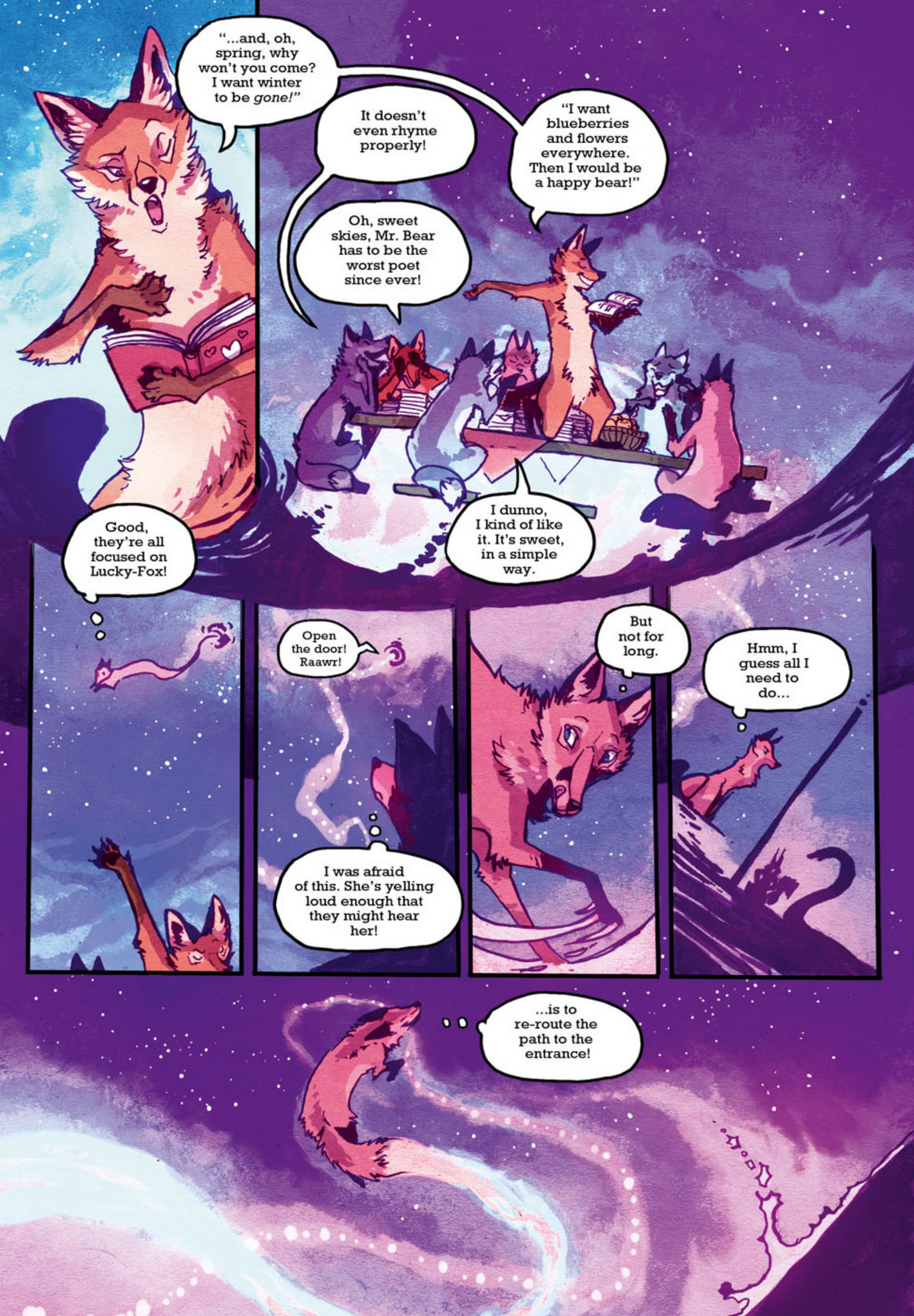

You think something has gone wrong?
Hey, it's possible, isn't it? The fox has showed up with his annoying face right after each shift, until now.
Perhaps... he has found some other way to get out of trouble...
...and simply left us here. Trapped. For *all eternity.*
Oh god, I just want to go home and *sleep!*
Don't lose heart! This will all be over soon, and everything will go back to normal.
Nope, it won't. We might as well lie down and die.
No, *no*! Hannu, get up! We have to keep going!
I'm sure the redtail won't just leave us here! He can't be that cruel!
He's probably only... *hindered* by something or other.

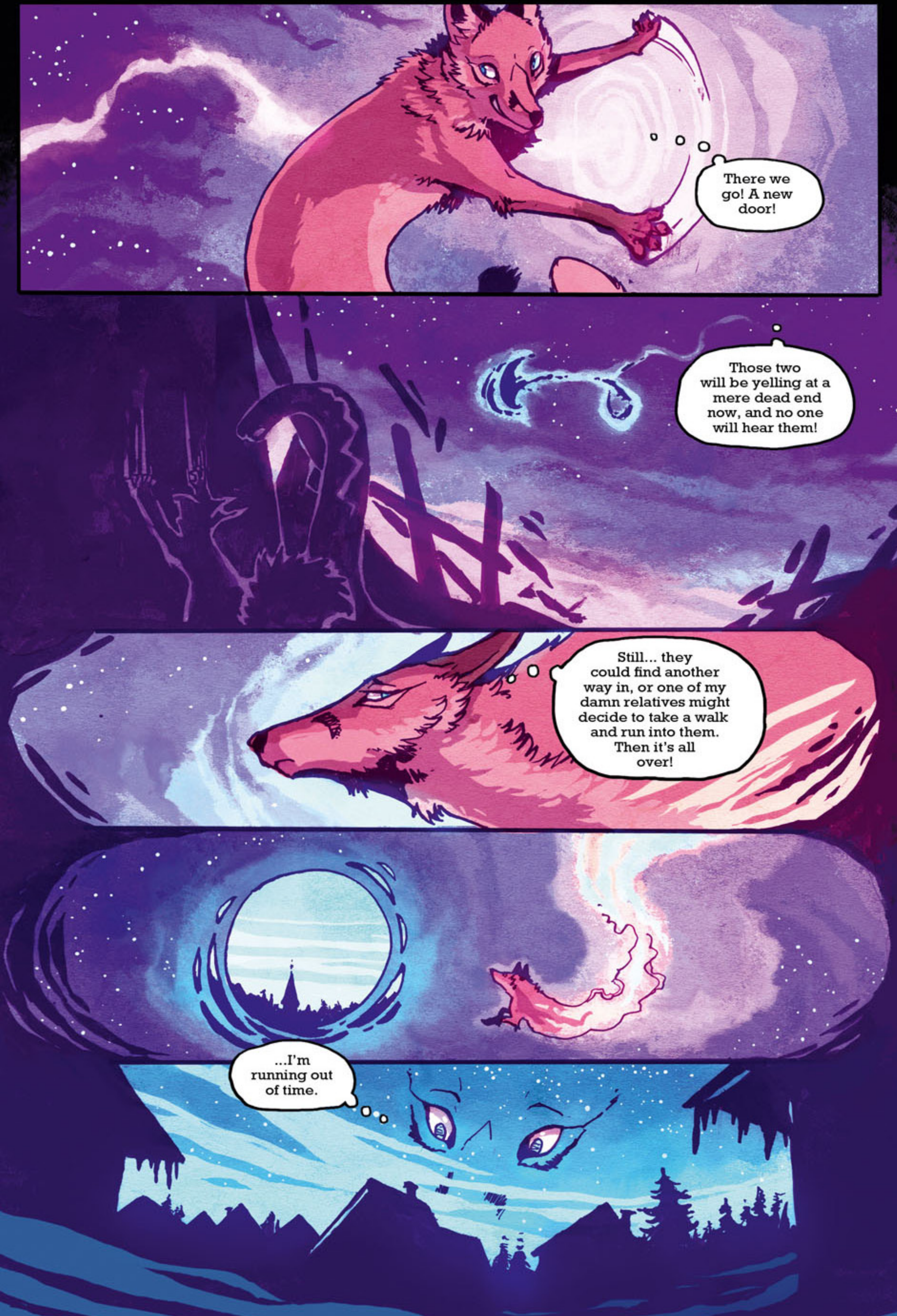

Fine. I'll get up, if you insist.
I do.
Hey, do you want a ride?
Hah, no thanks.
Why not?
Well, I have a feeling that you'll trip on something, I'll fall off and you end up stepping on me.
And, you know; I'll die.
Come on! Let's just try it. I feel really comfortable in this body, I won't trip!
Oops!
Ack!
Eeek!

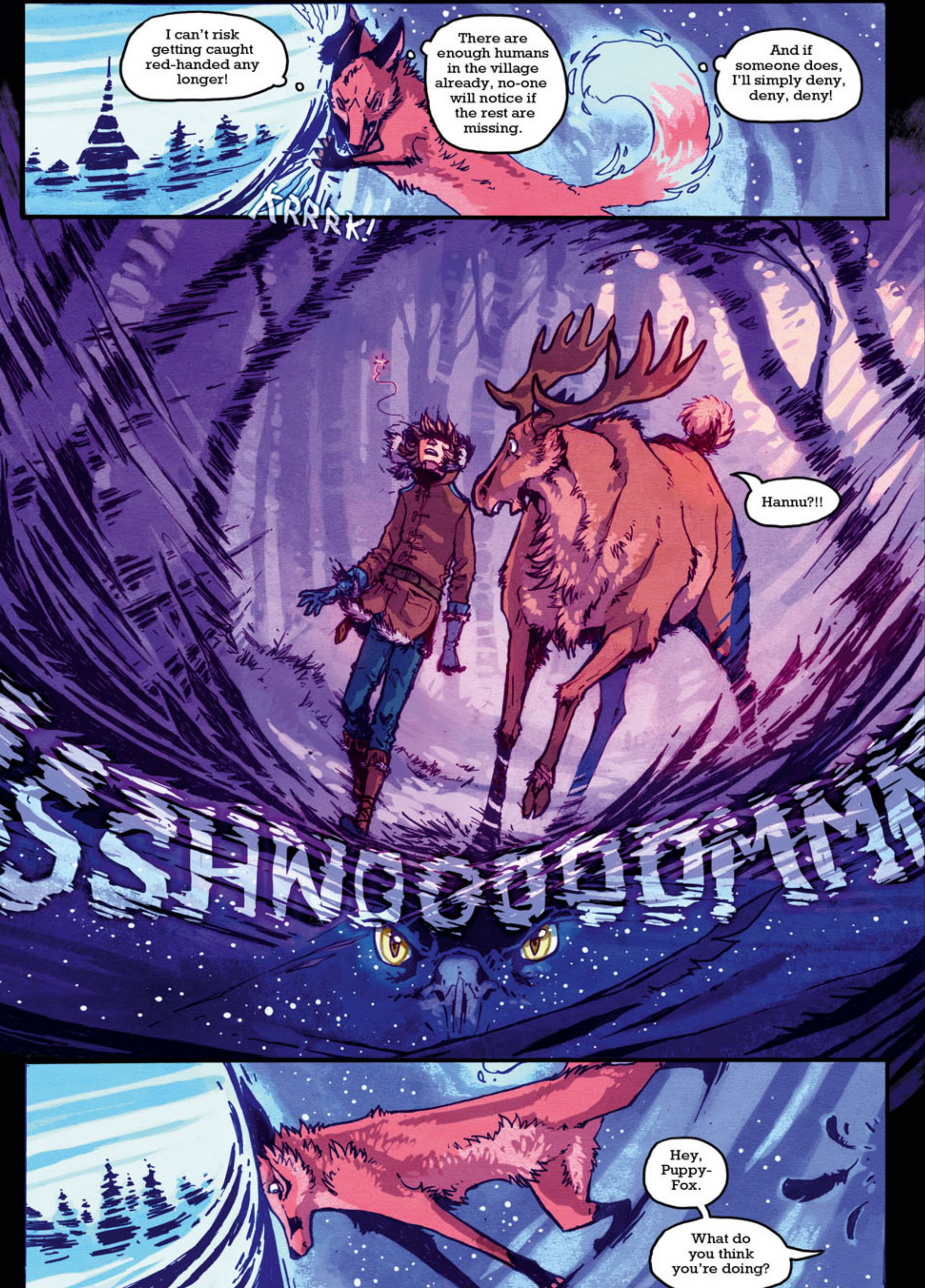

I'm stuck! Help!
THUMP!
Umph!
I'm so, so sorry! Are you alright?
Don't step on me!
I don't understand how I'm supposed to fit in between all these trees with my antlers.
Maybe I should keep my head like this?
Are you absolutely sure you don't want that ride?
With you walking around looking like you have brain damage?
No thanks, I want no part in it.

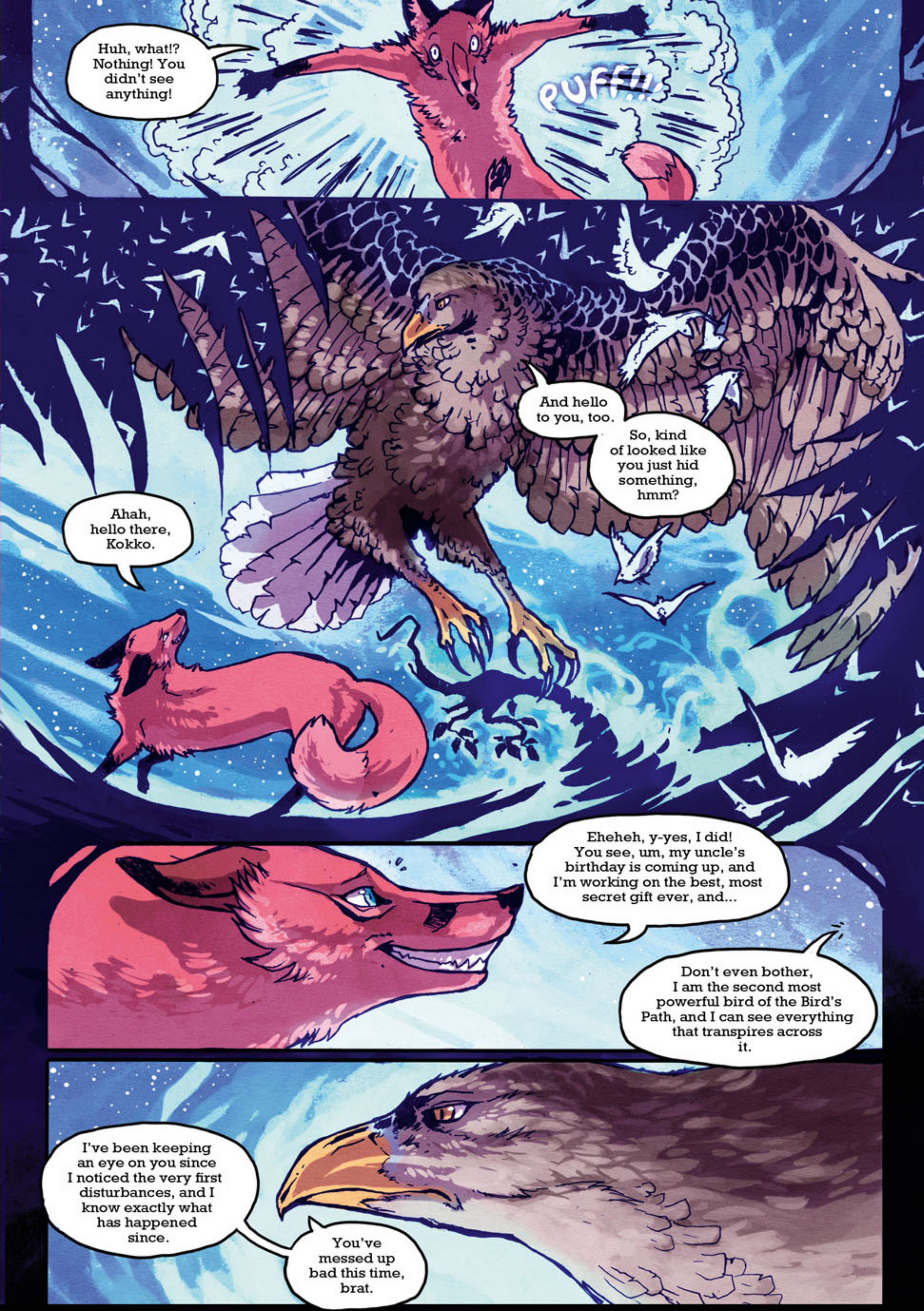

Open up!
Open up, open the door! Open up this instant!!!
Or I will break down this whole thing!
Howdy-doodle! Do not disturb us, 'cuz we're working hard! -The Foxes
More like hardly working. HAH! _Mr. Moose
Oh poop, it's the old squirrel hag!
She's going to tell my parents everything!
Why can't she ever be cool about anything?

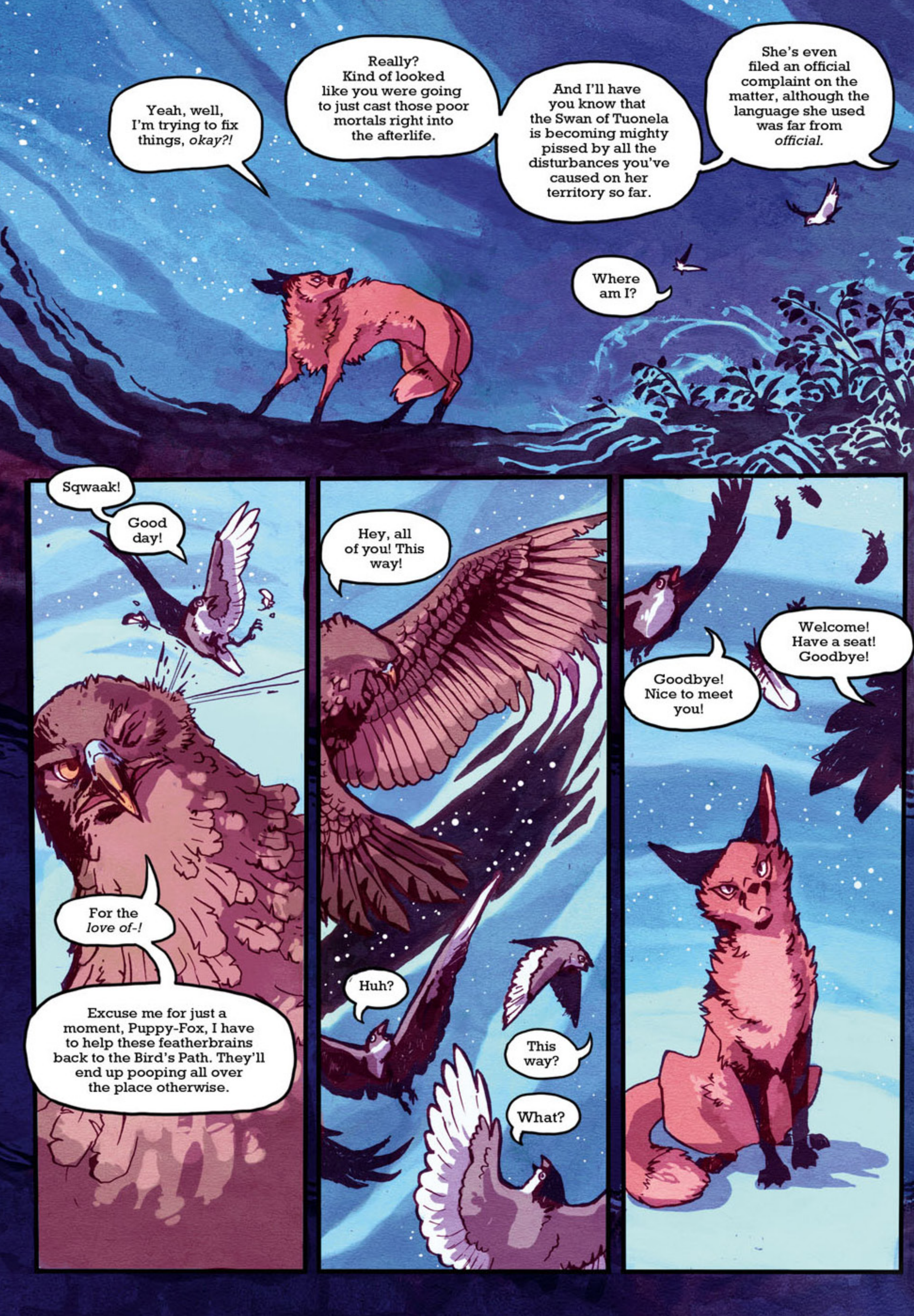

Maybe I could kidnap her, and lock her in a closet for a little while.
Then she'll forget everything because she's so old, and old people's brains are broken.
Mind your elders, punk! I could have had a stroke!
Moikka
Sorry.
Damn it! There goes my plan.
Can't really kidnap both of them...
The Foxes aren't opening the door?
Moikka!
No!
I'm losing my voice here! Stupid, modern soundproof monster of a door!
I told them to get a babysitter for their brat, but *nooo*, Puppy-Fox is too old for *that,* they said.
Maybe we should wait for their meeting to end?
I *will* get in, one way or another!
Open up!
You're definitely *not* getting in, I'll make sure of that.
Thankfully there's a secret emergency entrance to the meeting area!

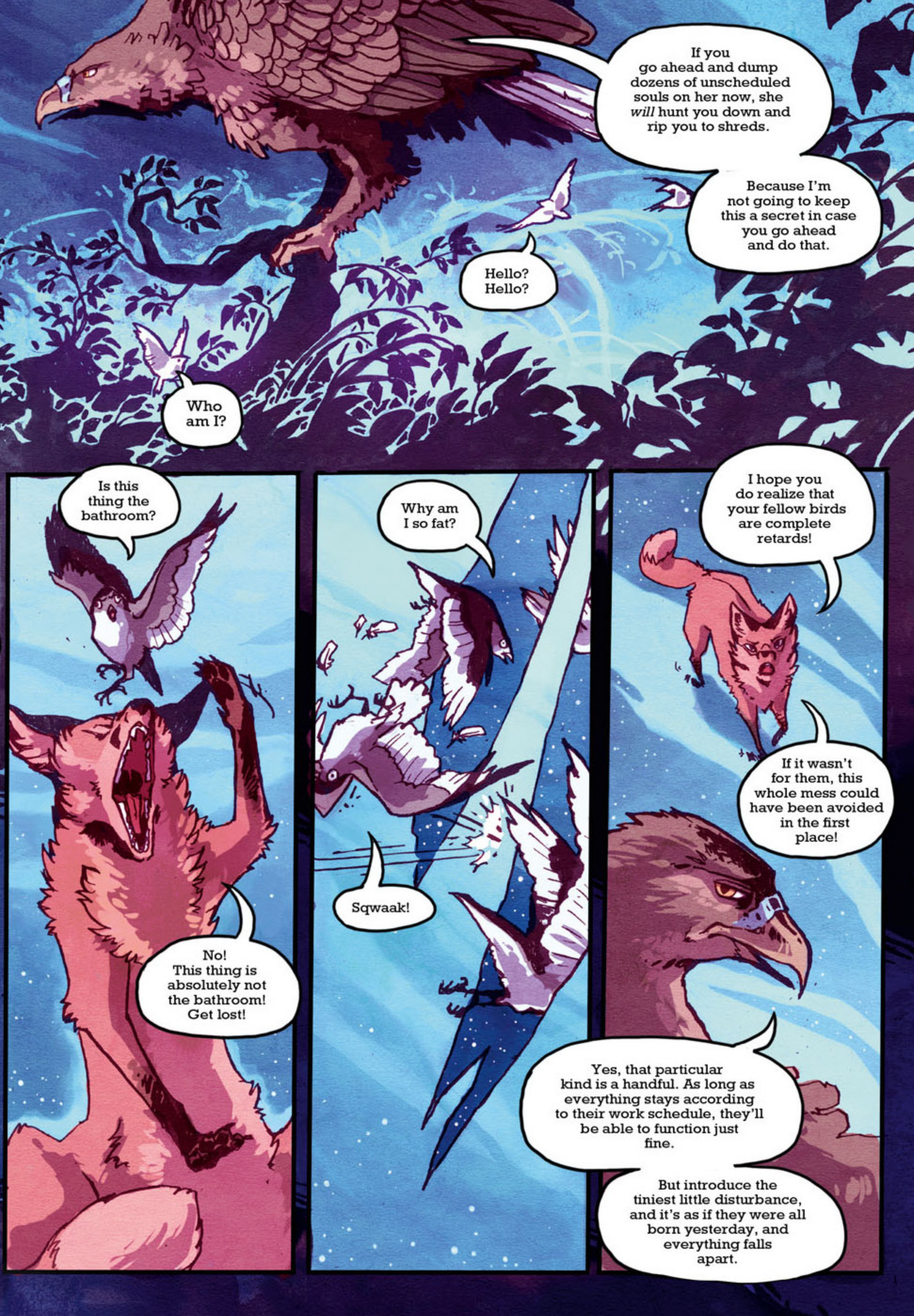

"...and, oh, spring, why won't you come? I want winter to be *gone!*"
It doesn't even rhyme properly!
"I want blueberries and flowers everywhere. Then I would be a happy bear!"
Oh, sweet skies, Mr. Bear has to be the worst poet since ever!
I dunno, I kind of like it. It's sweet, in a simple way.
Good, they're all focused on Lucky-Fox!
Open the door! Raawr!
I was afraid of this. She's yelling loud enough that they might hear her!
But not for long.
Hmm, I guess all I need to do...
...is to re-route the path to the entrance!

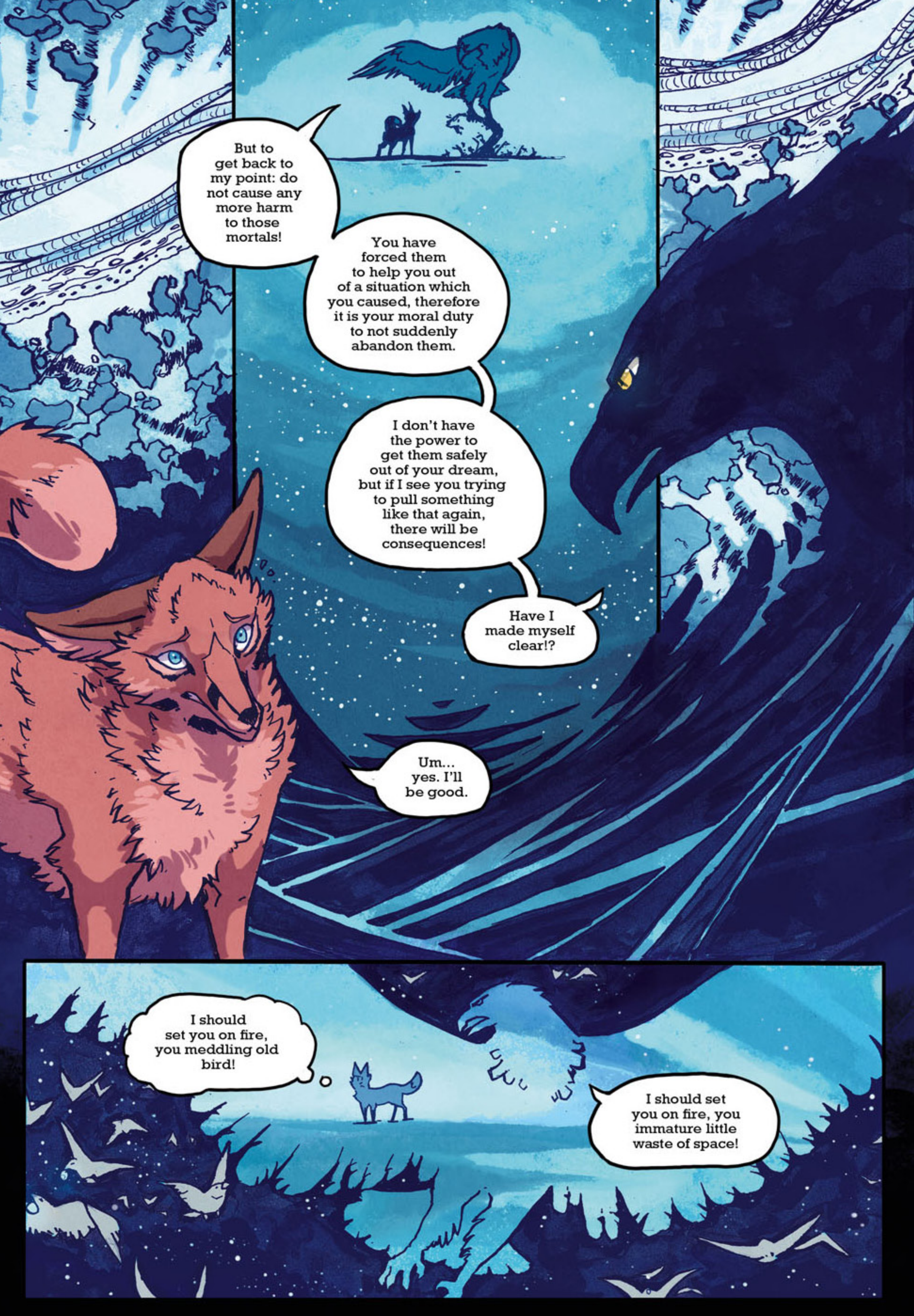

There we go! A new door!
Those two will be yelling at a mere dead end now, and no one will hear them!
Still... they could find another way in, or one of my damn relatives might decide to take a walk and run into them. Then it's all over!
...I'm running out of time.

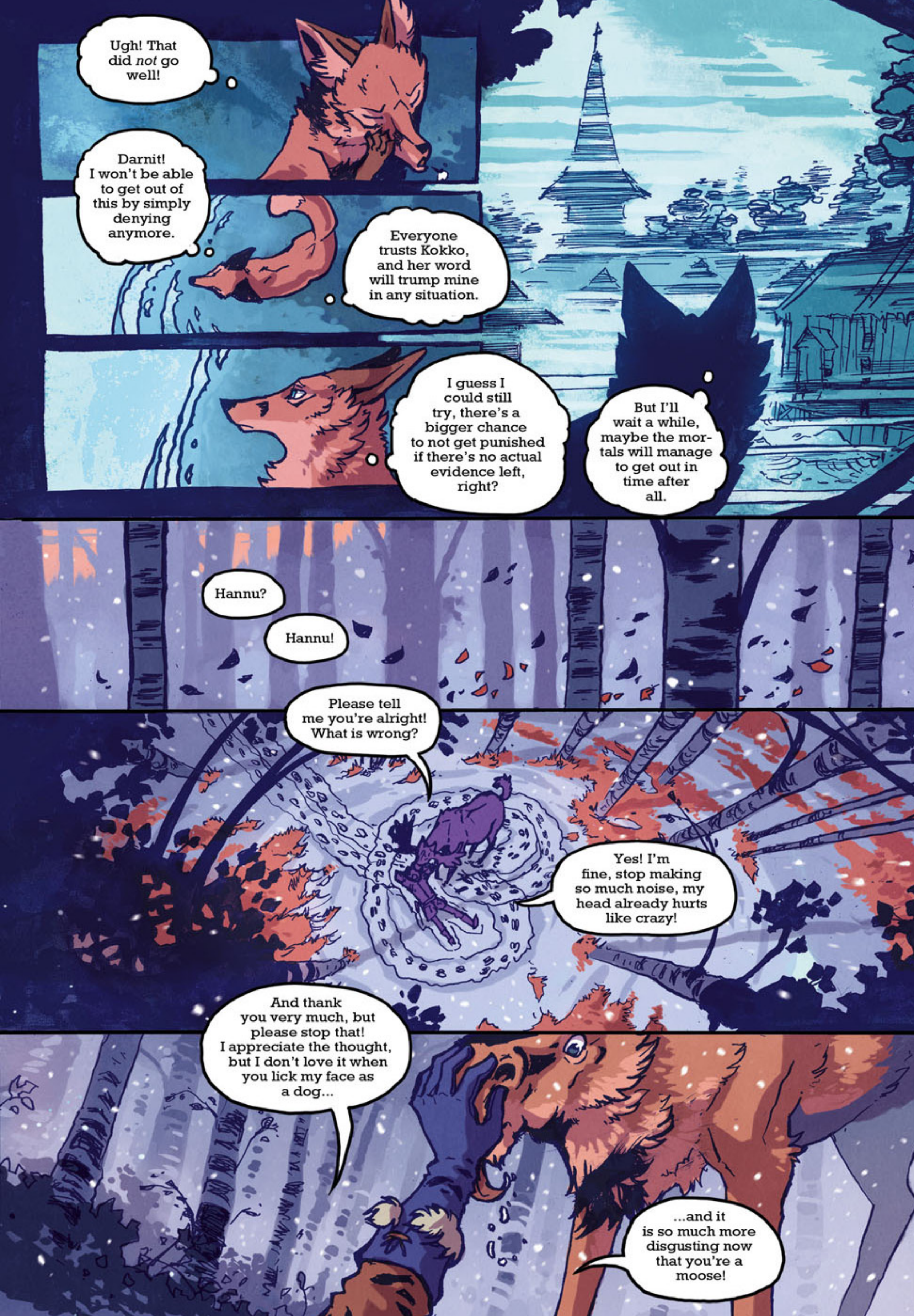

I can't risk getting caught red-handed any longer!
There are enough humans in the village already, no-one will notice if the rest are missing.
And if someone does, I'll simply deny, deny, deny!
KRRRK!
Hannu?!!
SHWOOOOOMM
Hey, Puppy-Fox.
What do you think you're doing?

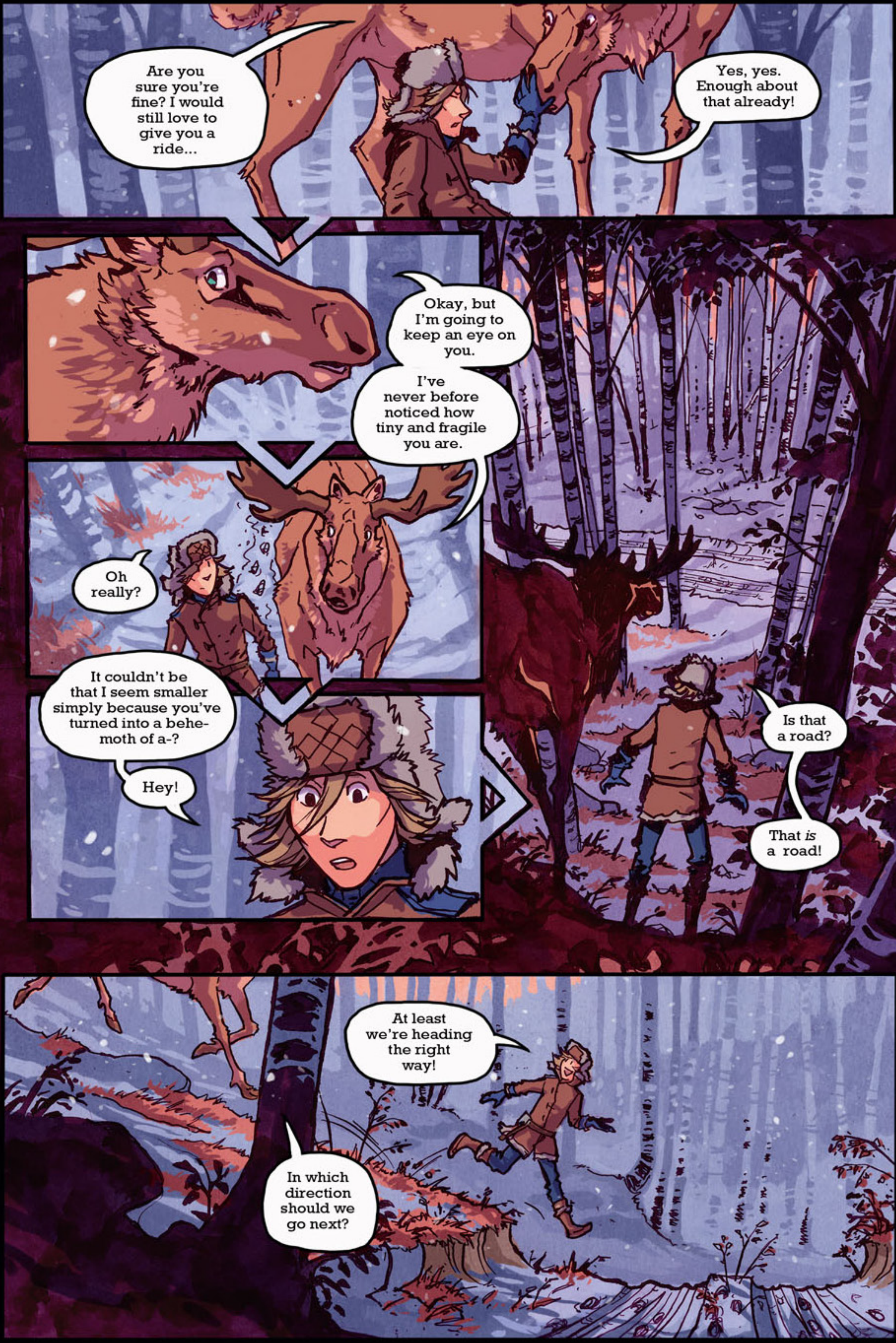

Huh, what!? Nothing! You didn't see anything!
PUFF!!!
Ahah, hello there, Kokko.
And hello to you, too.
So, kind of looked like you just hid something, hmm?
Eheheh, y-yes, I did! You see, um, my uncle's birthday is coming up, and I'm working on the best, most secret gift ever, and...
Don't even bother, I am the second most powerful bird of the Bird's Path, and I can see everything that transpires across it.
I've been keeping an eye on you since I noticed the very first disturbances, and I know exactly what has happened since.
You've messed up bad this time, brat.

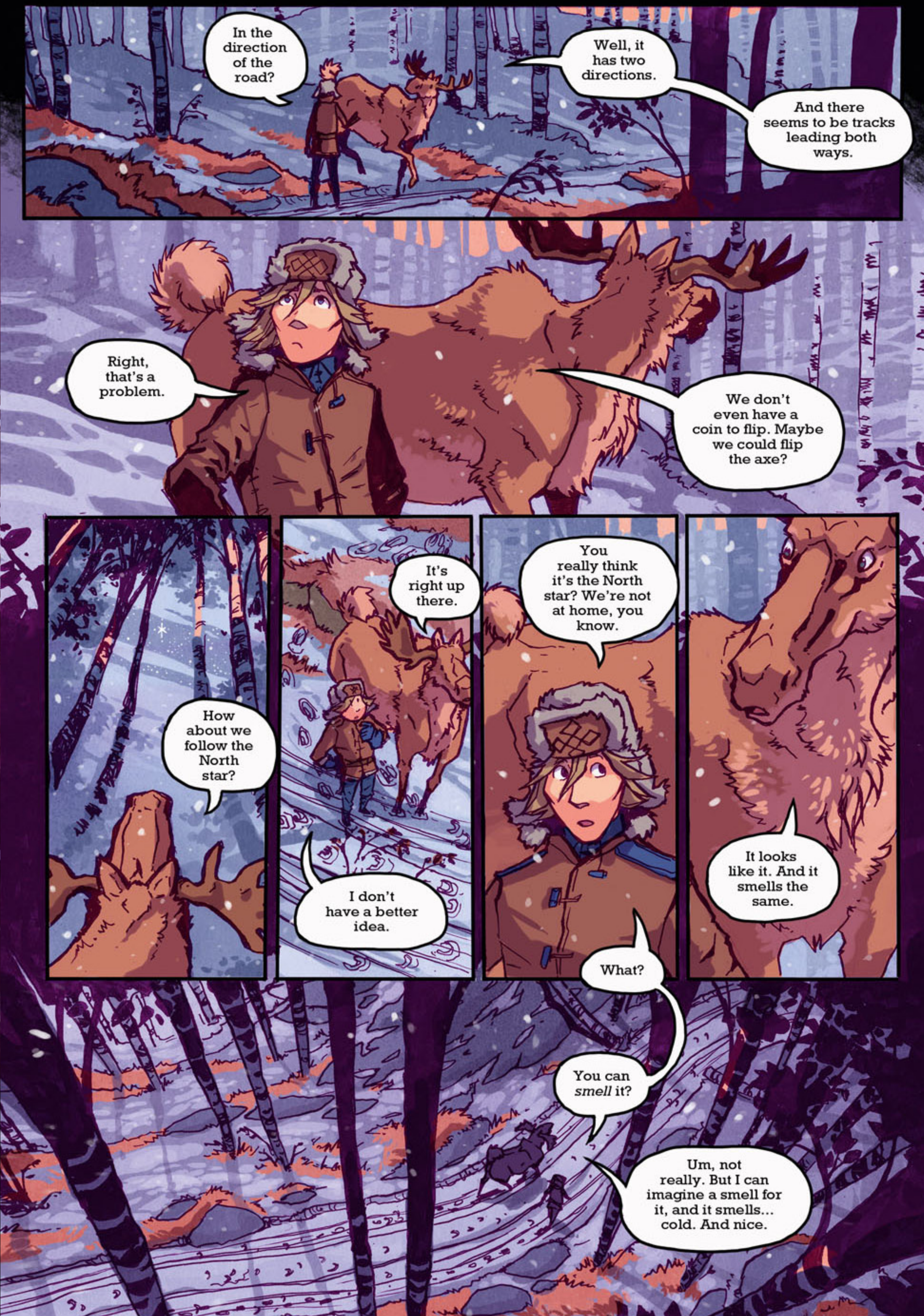

Yeah, well, I'm trying to fix things, *okay?!*
Really? Kind of looked like you were going to just cast those poor mortals right into the afterlife.
And I'll have you know that the Swan of Tuonela is becoming mighty pissed by all the disturbances you've caused on her territory so far.
She's even filed an official complaint on the matter, although the language she used was far from *official.*
Where am I?
Sqwaak!
Good day!
For the *love of-!*
Excuse me for just a moment, Puppy-Fox, I have to help these featherbrains back to the Bird's Path. They'll end up pooping all over the place otherwise.
Hey, all of you! This way!
Huh?
This way?
What?
Goodbye! Nice to meet you!
Welcome! Have a seat! Goodbye!

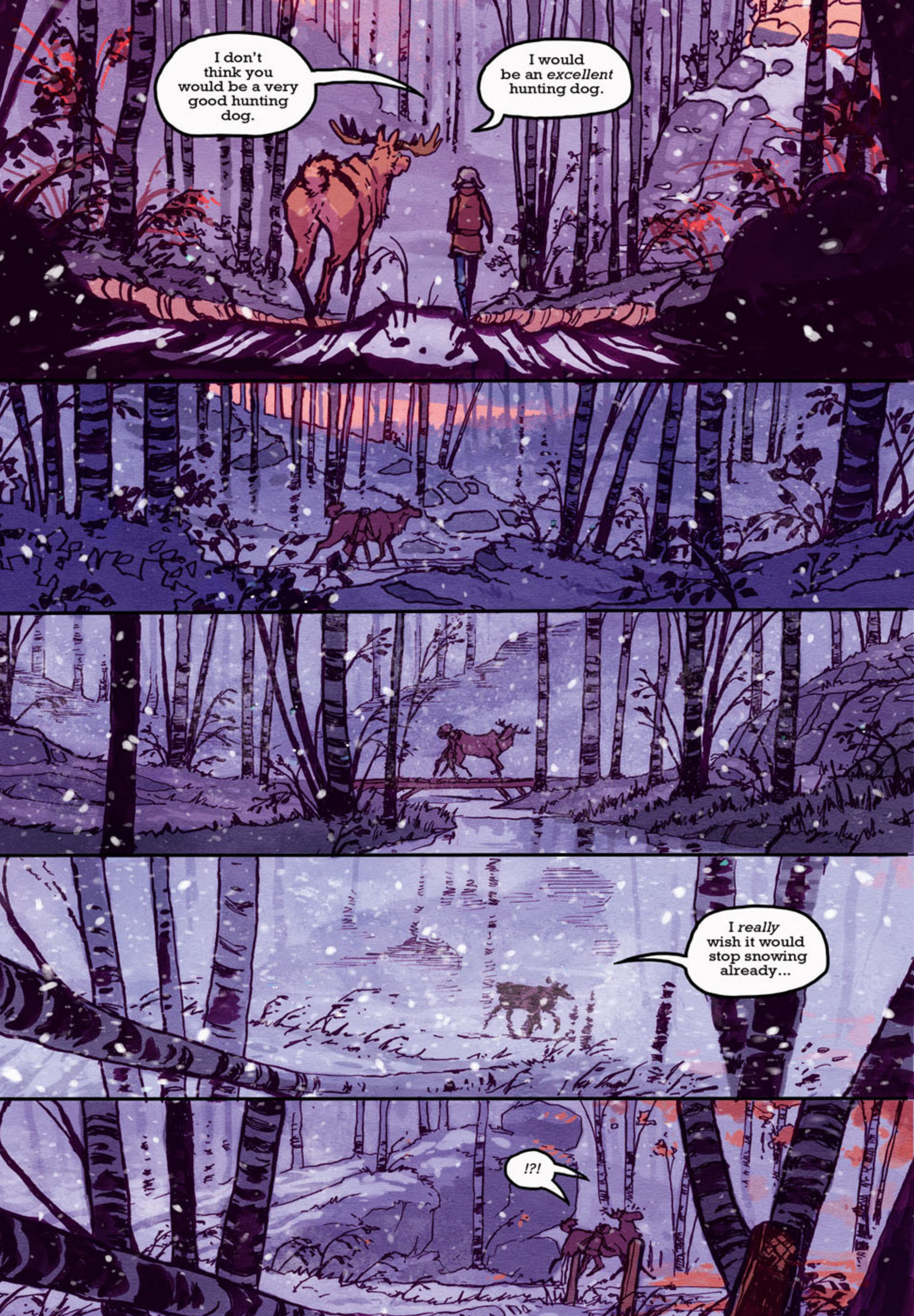

If you go ahead and dump dozens of unscheduled souls on her now, she *will* hunt you down and rip you to shreds.
Because I'm not going to keep this a secret in case you go ahead and do that.
Hello? Hello?
Who am I?
Is this thing the bathroom?
No! This thing is absolutely not the bathroom! Get lost!
Why am I so fat?
Sqwaak!
I hope you do realize that your fellow birds are complete retards!
If it wasn't for them, this whole mess could have been avoided in the first place!
Yes, that particular kind is a handful. As long as everything stays according to their work schedule, they'll be able to function just fine.
But introduce the tiniest little disturbance, and it's as if they were all born yesterday, and everything falls apart.

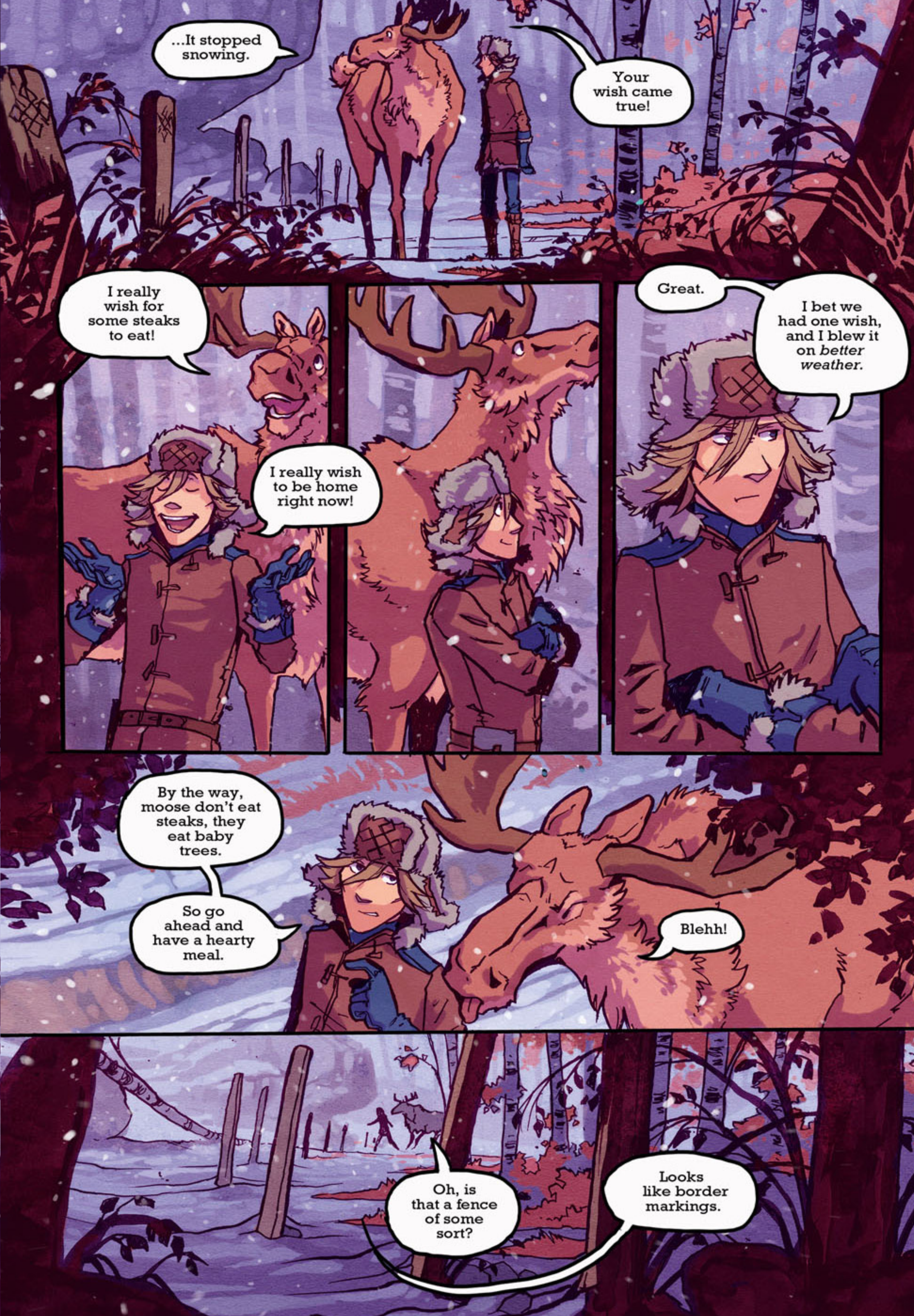

But to get back to my point: do not cause any more harm to those mortals!
You have forced them to help you out of a situation which you caused, therefore it is your moral duty to not suddenly abandon them.
I don't have the power to get them safely out of your dream, but if I see you trying to pull something like that again, there will be consequences!
Have I made myself clear!?
Um... yes. I'll be good.
I should set you on fire, you meddling old bird!
I should set you on fire, you immature little waste of space!

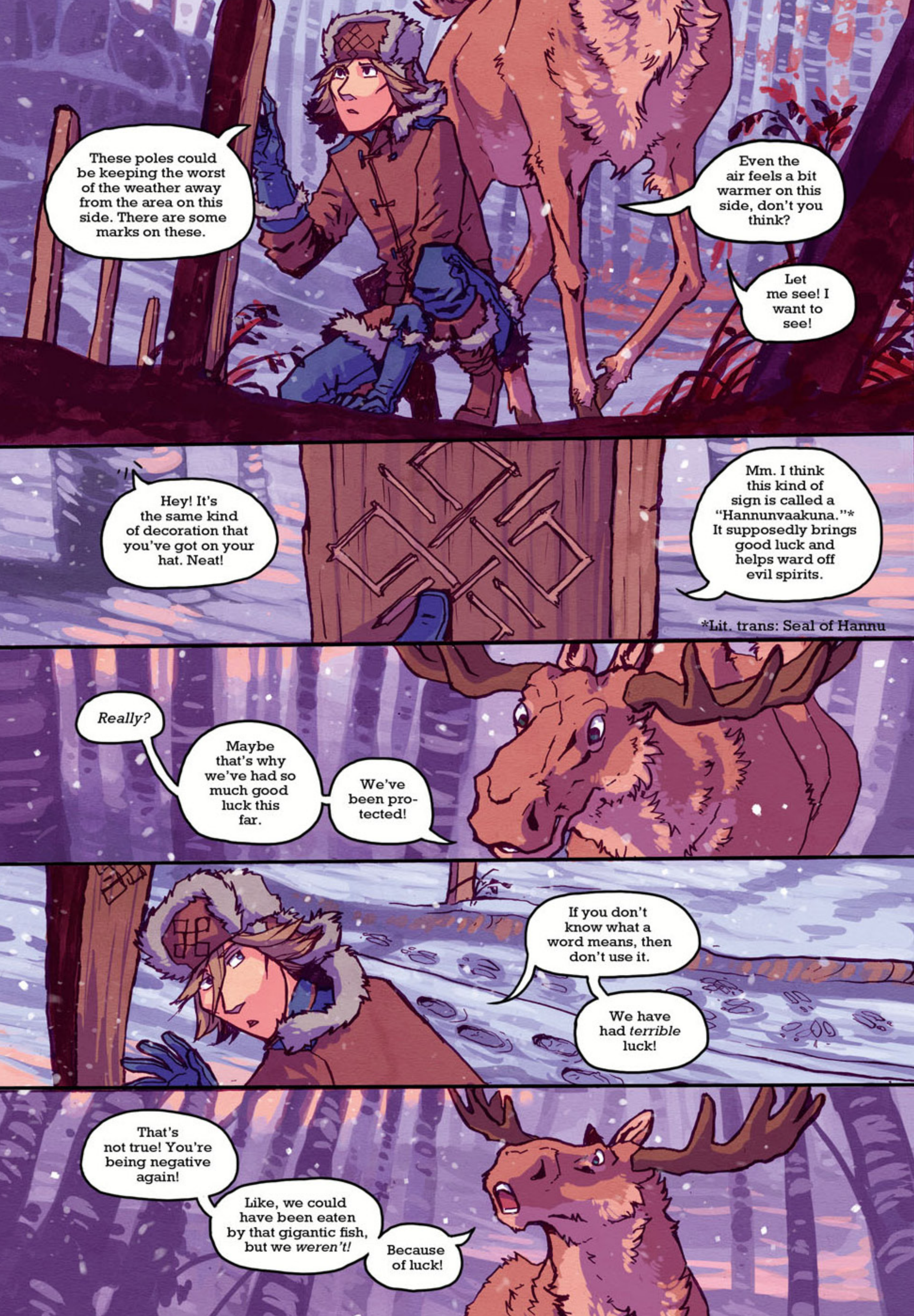

Ugh! That did *not* go well!
Darnit! I won't be able to get out of this by simply denying anymore.
Everyone trusts Kokko, and her word will trump mine in any situation.
I guess I could still try, there's a bigger chance to not get punished if there's no actual evidence left, right?
But I'll wait a while, maybe the mortals will manage to get out in time after all.
Hannu?
Hannu!
Please tell me you're alright! What is wrong?
Yes! I'm fine, stop making so much noise, my head already hurts like crazy!
And thank you very much, but please stop that! I appreciate the thought, but I don't love it when you lick my face as a dog...
...and it is so much more disgusting now that you're a moose!


Are you sure you're fine? I would still love to give you a ride...
Yes, yes. Enough about that already!
Okay, but I'm going to keep an eye on you.
I've never before noticed how tiny and fragile you are.
Oh really?
It couldn't be that I seem smaller simply because you've turned into a behemoth of a-?
Hey!
Is that a road?
That *is* a road!
At least we're heading the right way!
In which direction should we go next?

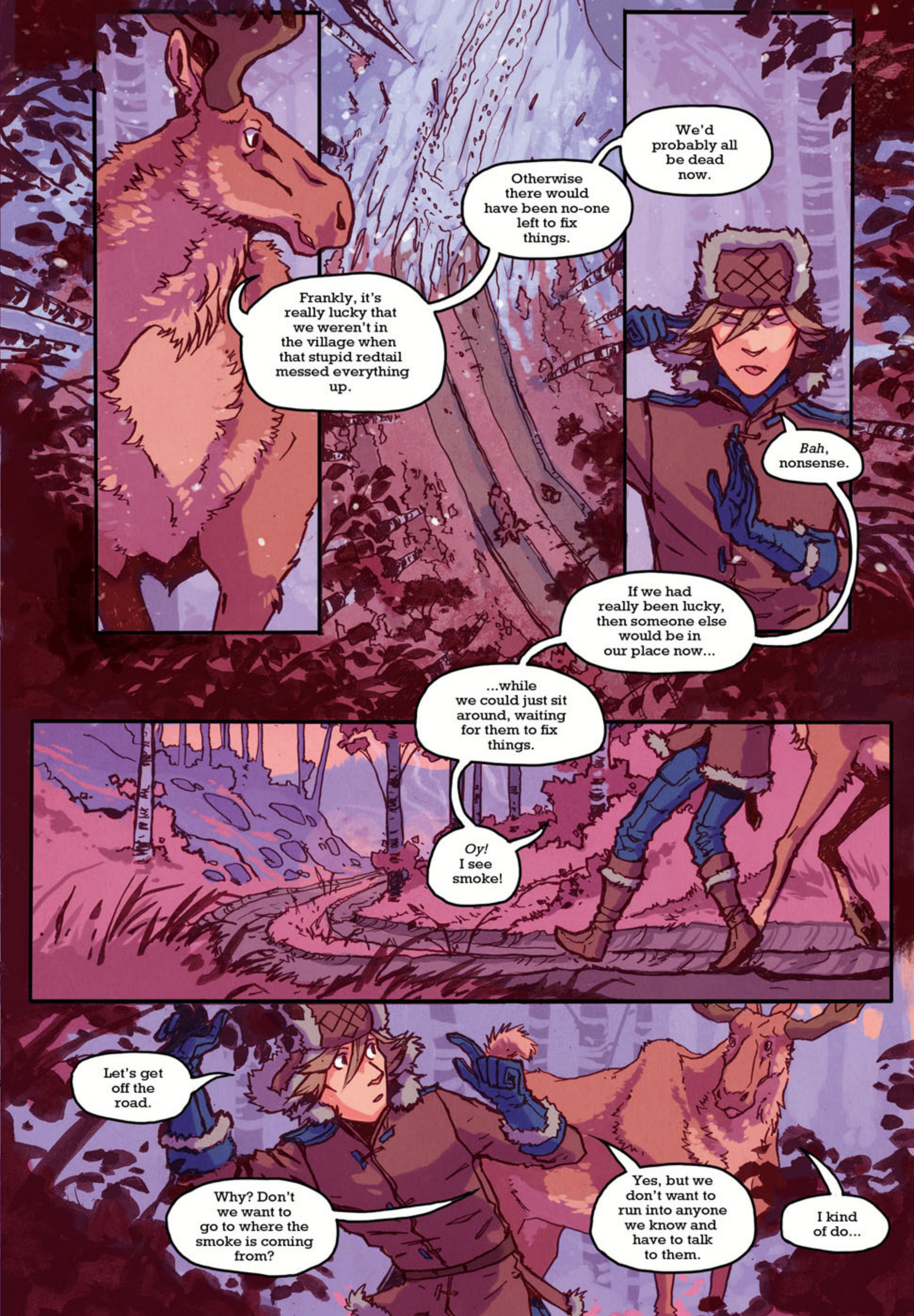

In the direction of the road?
Well, it has two directions.
And there seems to be tracks leading both ways.
Right, that's a problem.
We don't even have a coin to flip. Maybe we could flip the axe?
How about we follow the North star?
It's right up there.
I don't have a better idea.
You really think it's the North star? We're not at home, you know.
It looks like it. And it smells the same.
What?
You can *smell* it?
Um, not really. But I can imagine a smell for it, and it smells... cold. And nice.

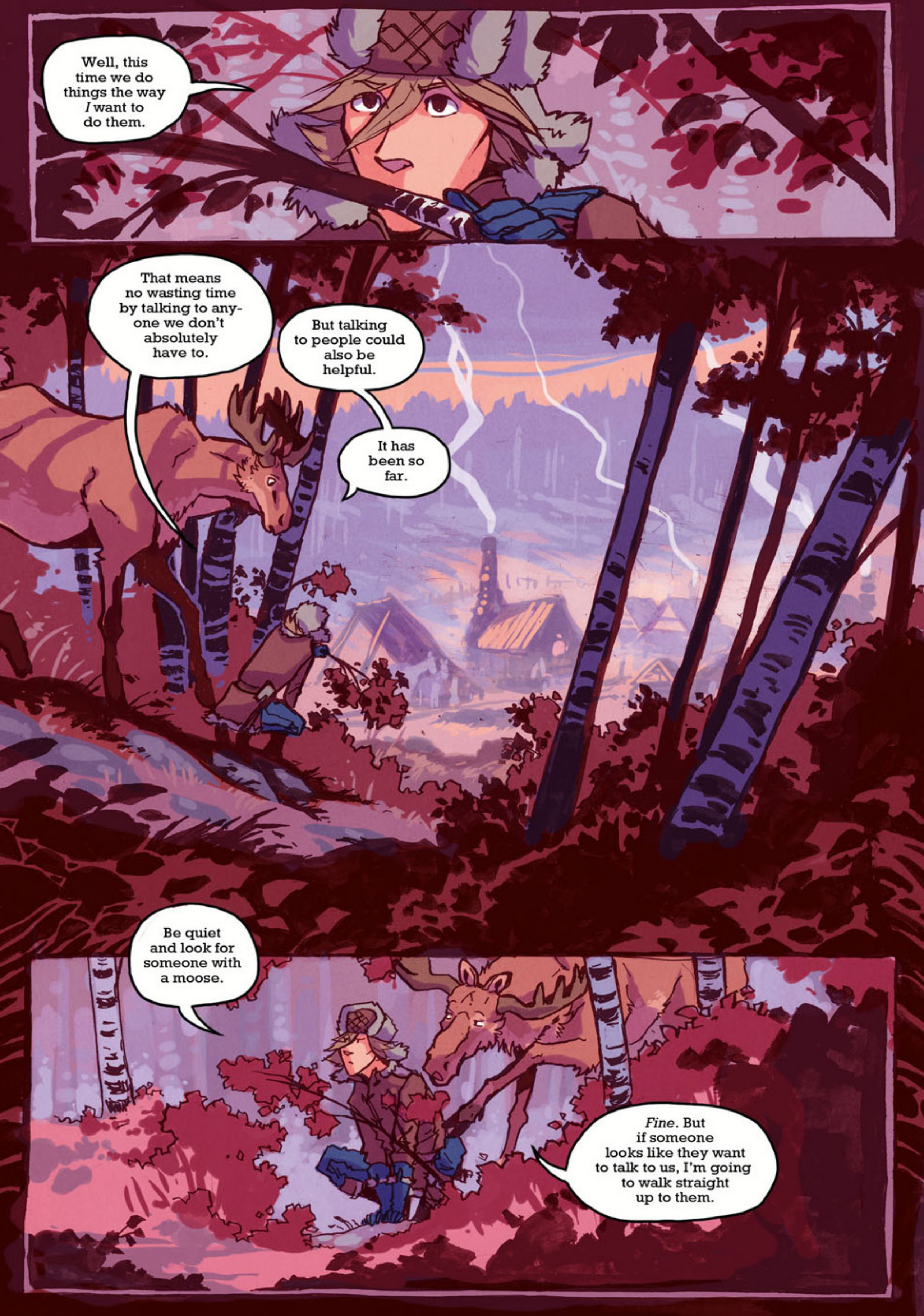

I don't think you would be a very good hunting dog.
I would be an *excellent* hunting dog.
I *really* wish it would stop snowing already...
!?!

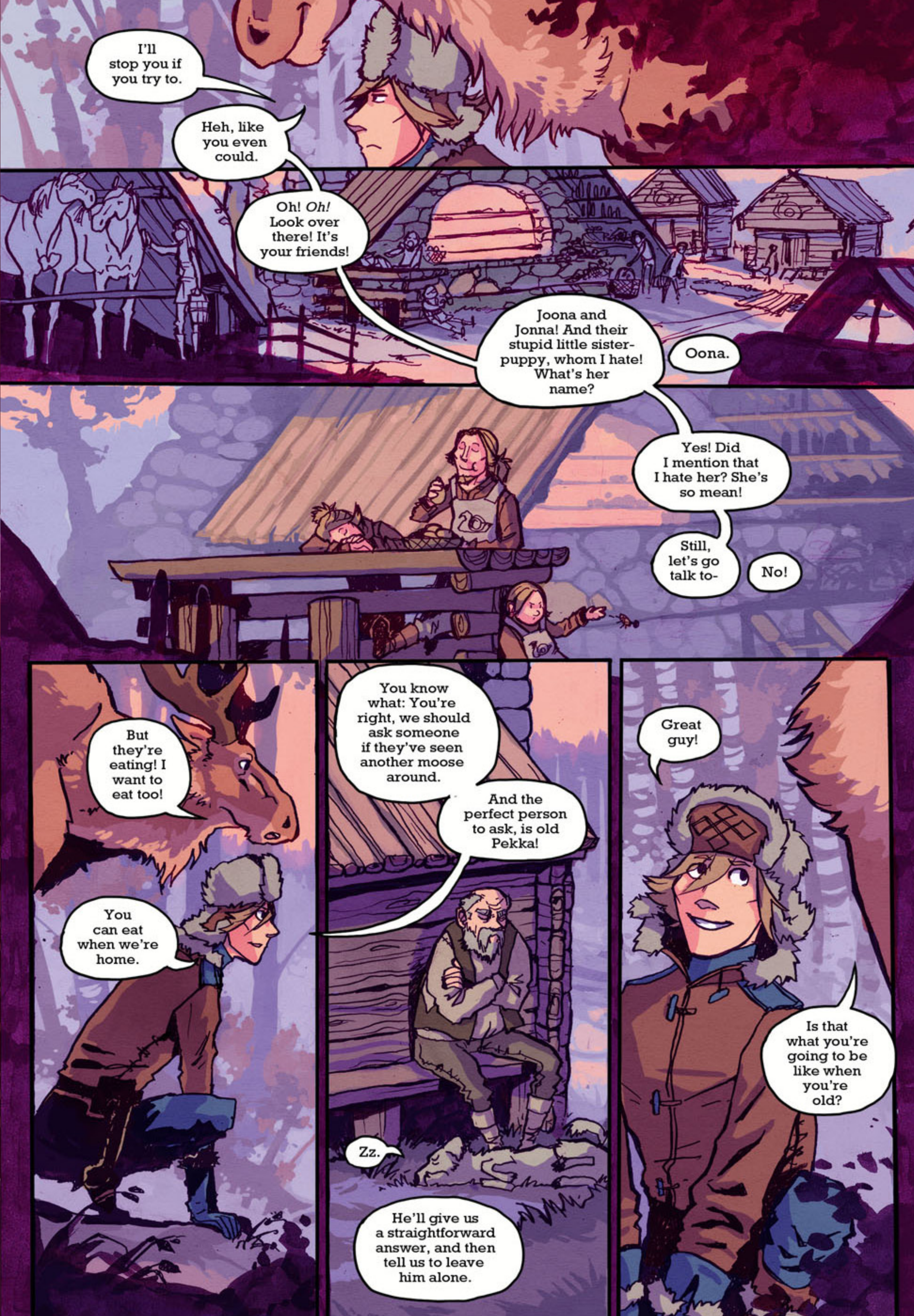

...It stopped snowing.
Your wish came true!
I really wish for some steaks to eat!
I really wish to be home right now!
Great.
I bet we had one wish, and I blew it on *better weather*.
By the way, moose don't eat steaks, they eat baby trees.
So go ahead and have a hearty meal.
Blehh!
Oh, is that a fence of some sort?
Looks like border markings.

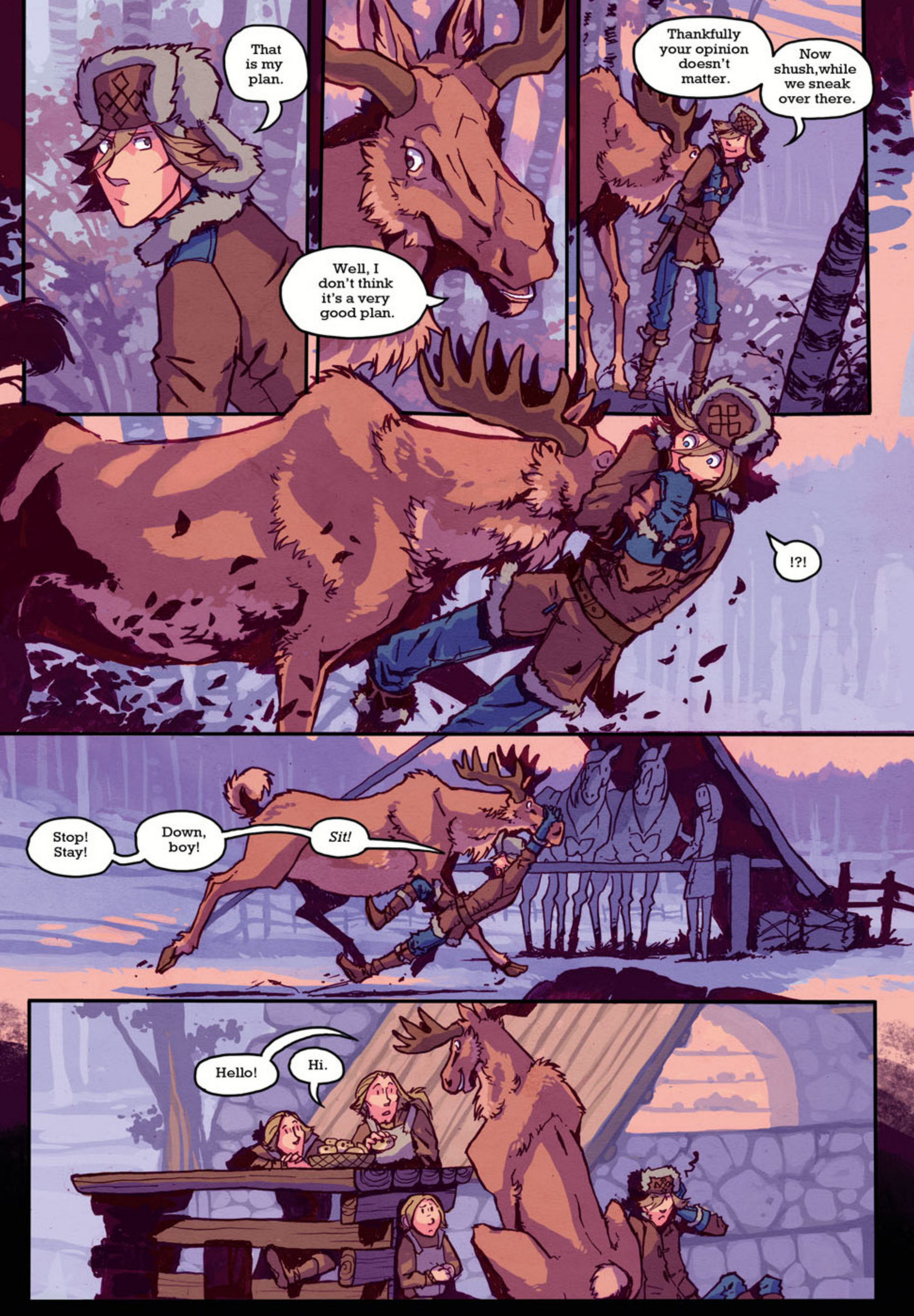

These poles could be keeping the worst of the weather away from the area on this side. There are some marks on these.
Even the air feels a bit warmer on this side, don't you think?
Let me see! I want to see!
Hey! It's the same kind of decoration that you've got on your hat. Neat!
Mm. I think this kind of sign is called a "Hannunvaakuna."* It supposedly brings good luck and helps ward off evil spirits.
Really?
Maybe that's why we've had so much good luck this far.
We've been protected!
If you don't know what a word means, then don't use it.
We have had *terrible* luck!
That's not true! You're being negative again!
Like, we could have been eaten by that gigantic fish, but we *weren't!*
Because of luck!

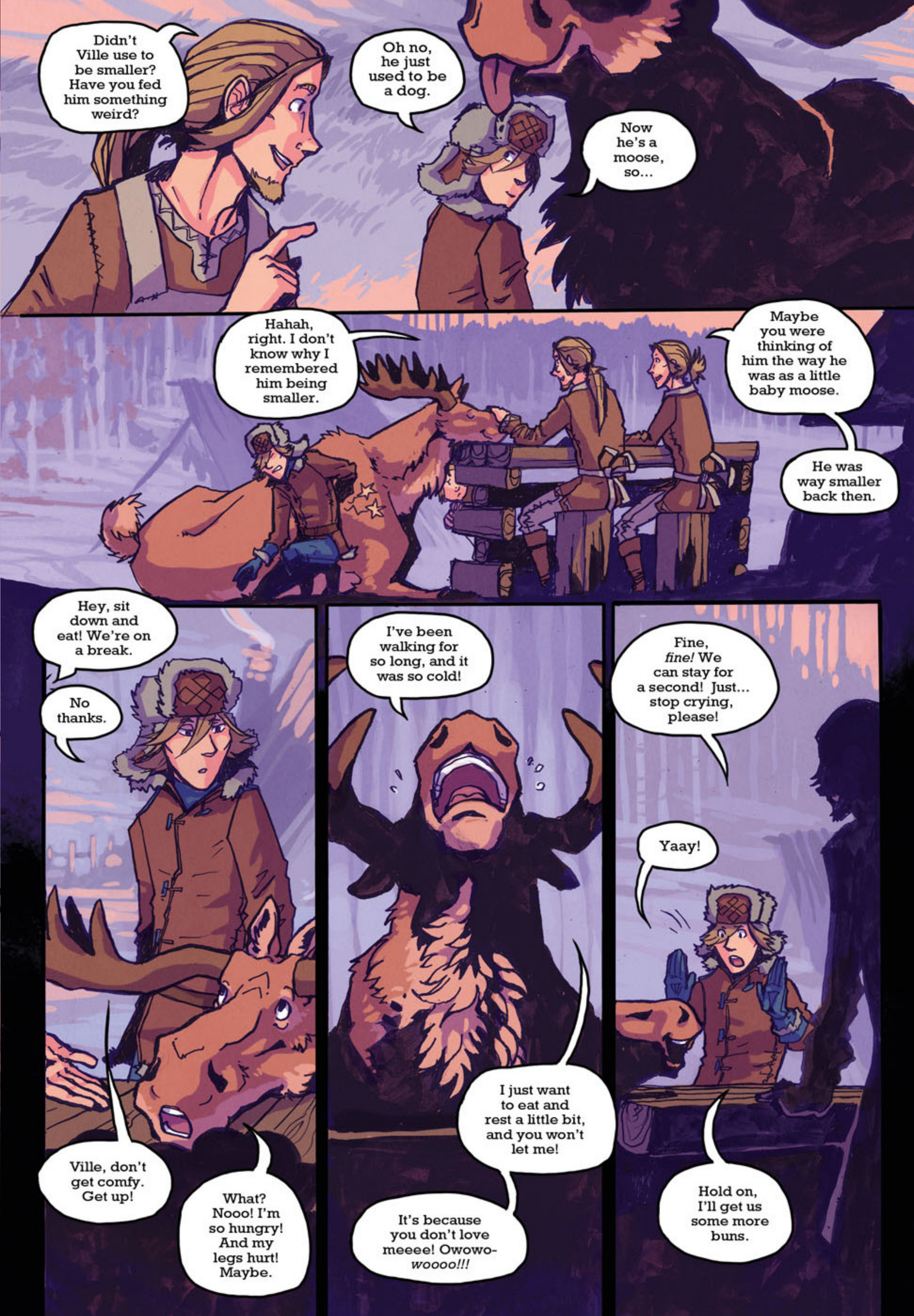
*Lit. trans: Seal of Hannu

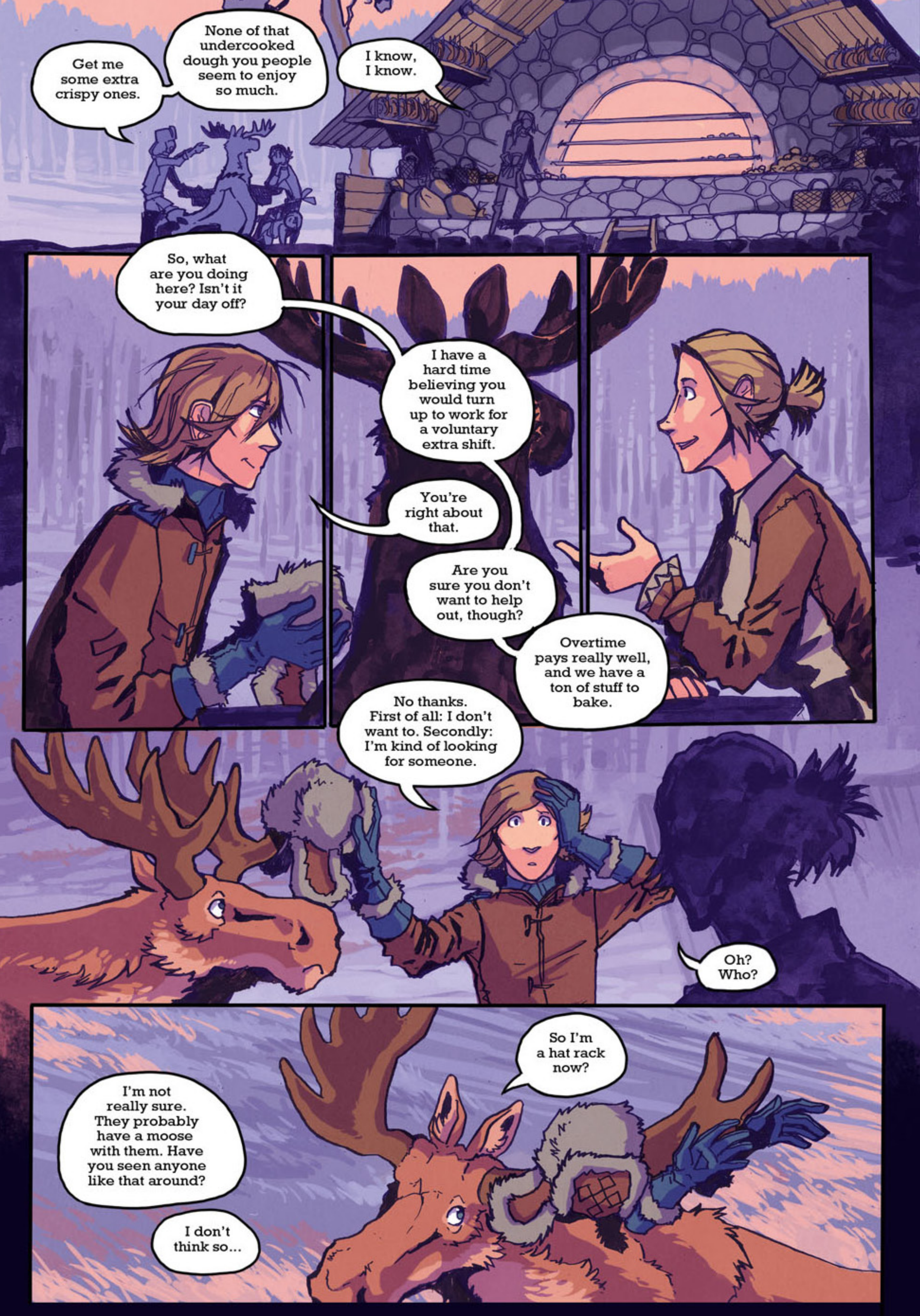

Frankly, it's really lucky that we weren't in the village when that stupid redtail messed everything up.
Otherwise there would have been no-one left to fix things.
We'd probably all be dead now.
Bah, nonsense.
If we had really been lucky, then someone else would be in our place now...
...while we could just sit around, waiting for them to fix things.
Oy! I see smoke!
Let's get off the road.
Why? Don't we want to go to where the smoke is coming from?
Yes, but we don't want to run into anyone we know and have to talk to them.
I kind of do...

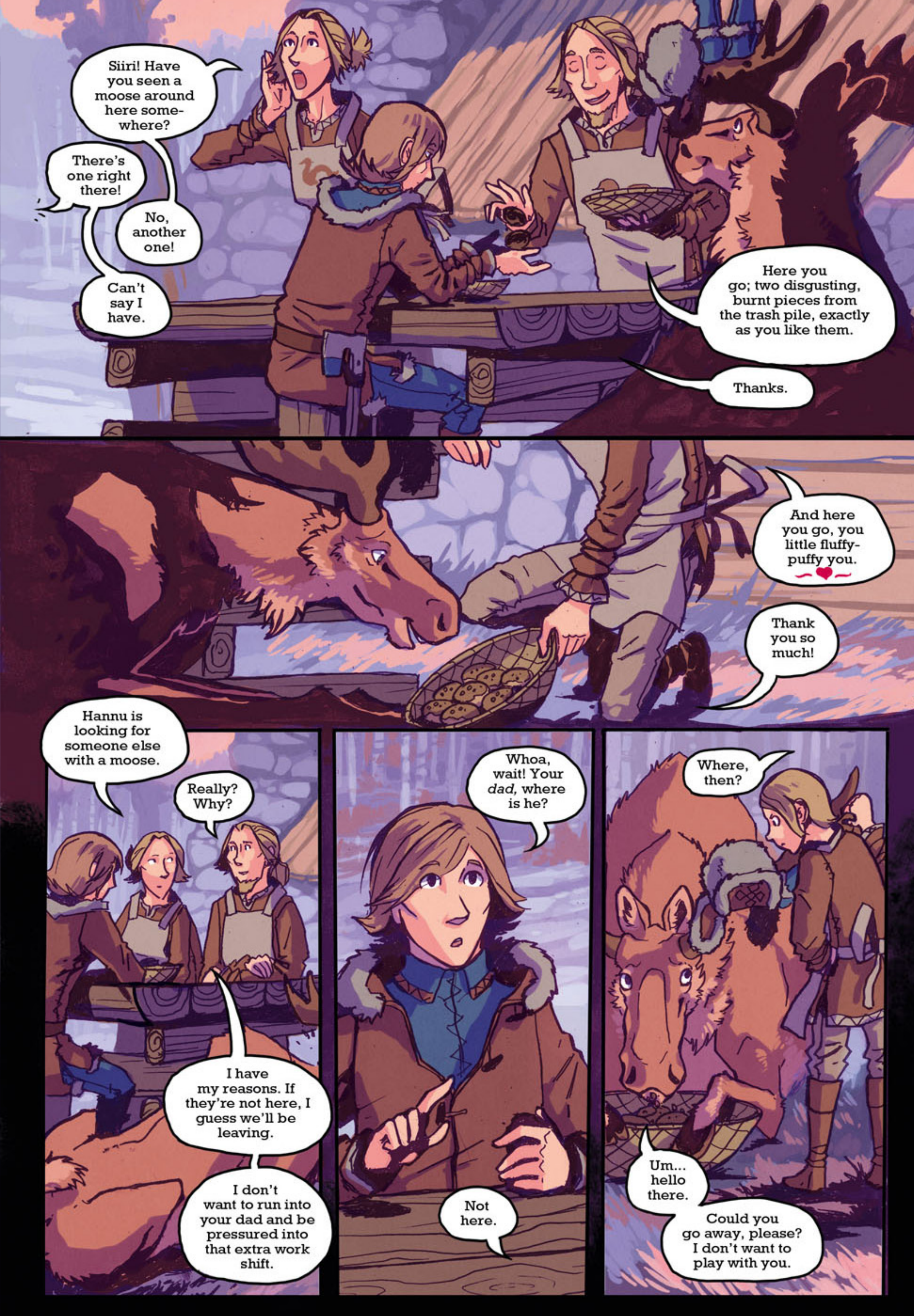

Well, this time we do things the way *I* want to do them.
That means no wasting time by talking to anyone we don't absolutely have to.
But talking to people could also be helpful.
It has been so far.
Be quiet and look for someone with a moose.
Fine. But if someone looks like they want to talk to us, I'm going to walk straight up to them.

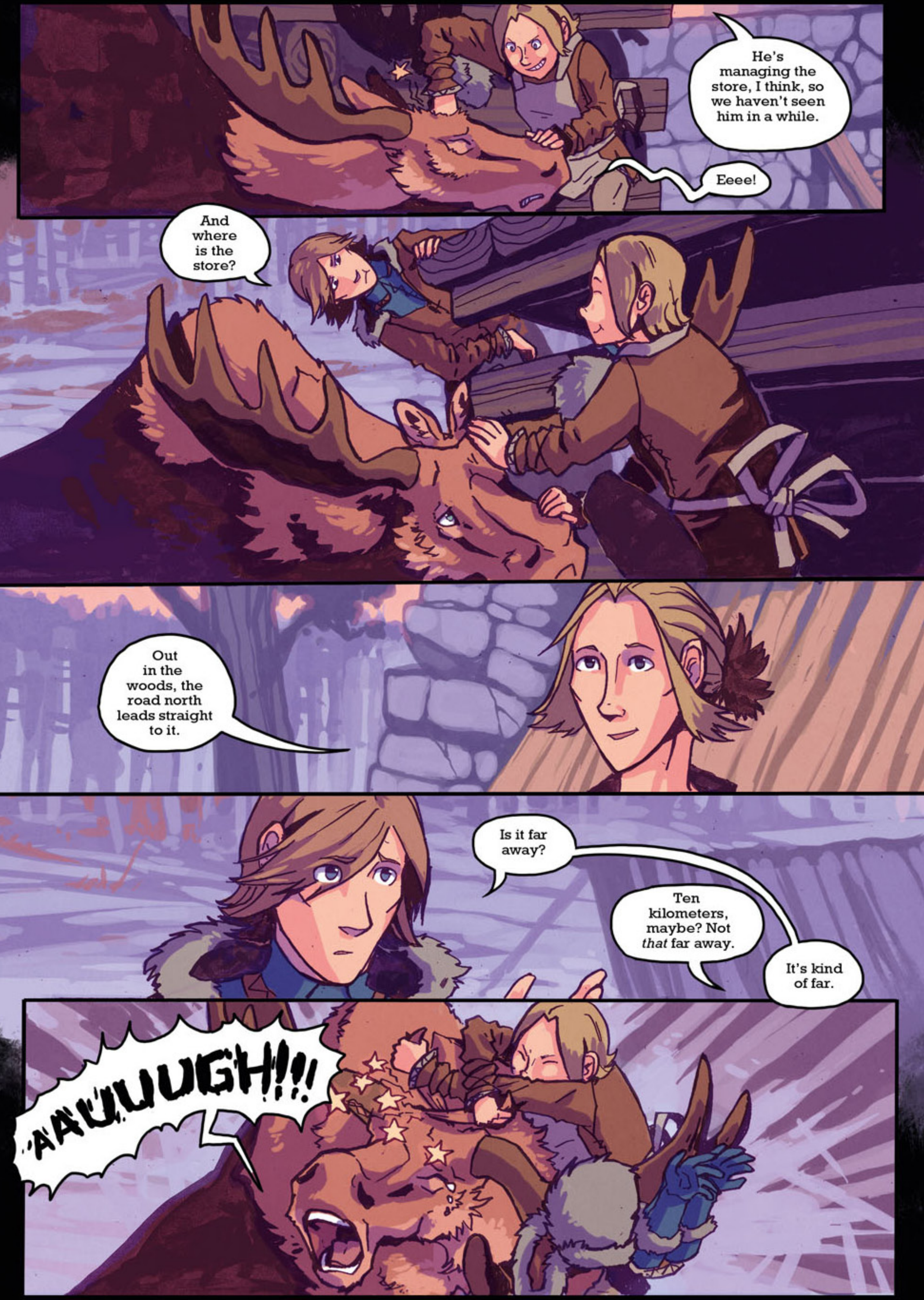

I'll stop you if you try to.
Heh, like you even could.
Oh! *Oh!* Look over there! It's your friends!
Joona and Jonna! And their stupid little sister-puppy, whom I hate! What's her name?
Oona.
Yes! Did I mention that I hate her? She's so mean!
Still, let's go talk to-
No!
But they're eating! I want to eat too!
You can eat when we're home.
You know what: You're right, we should ask someone if they've seen another moose around.
And the perfect person to ask, is old Pekka!
Zz.
He'll give us a straightforward answer, and then tell us to leave him alone.
Great guy!
Is that what you're going to be like when you're old?

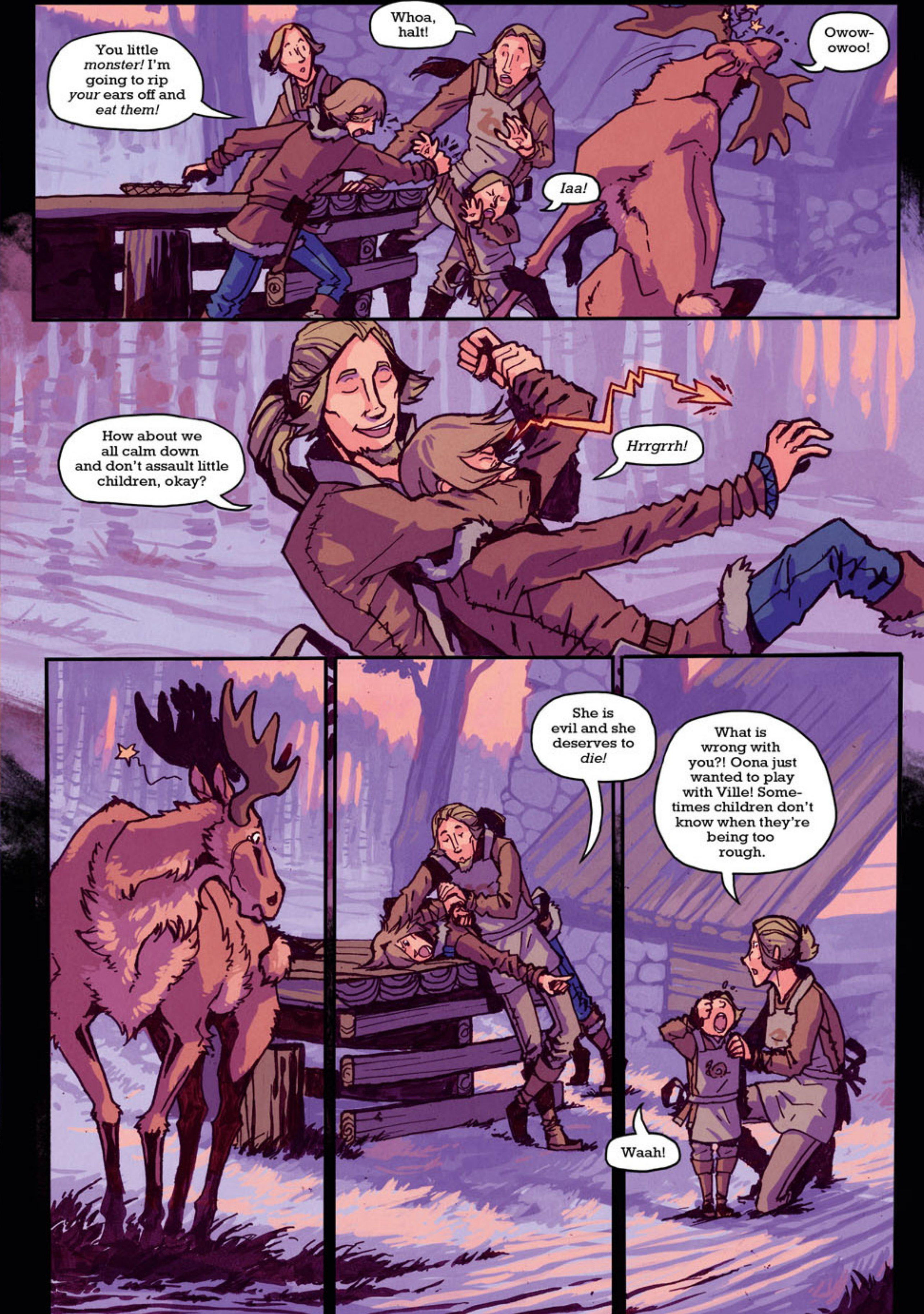

That is my plan.
Well, I don't think it's a very good plan.
Thankfully your opinion doesn't matter.
Now shush, while we sneak over there.
!?!
Stop! Stay!
Down, boy!
Sit!
Hello!
Hi.

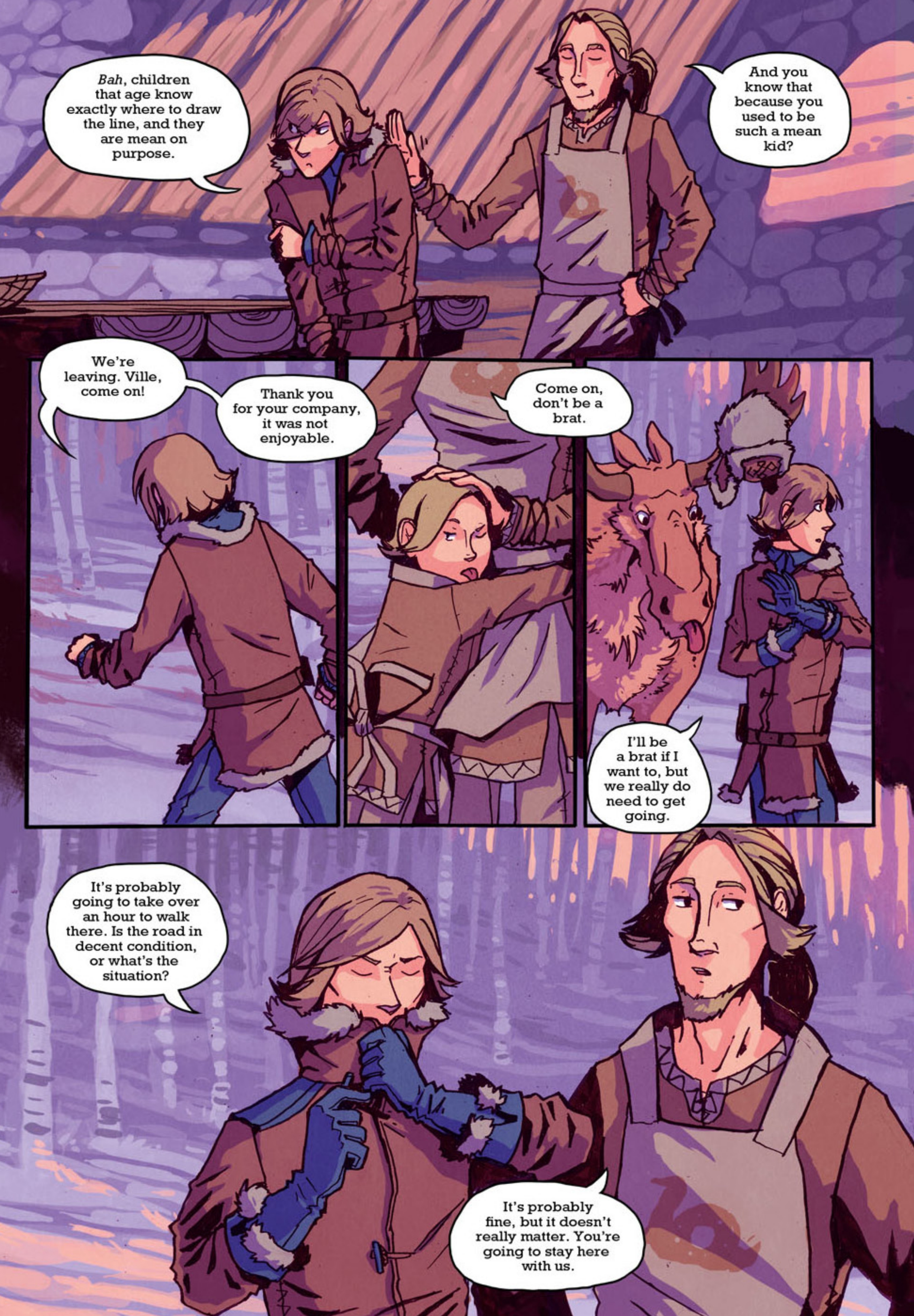

Didn't Ville use to be smaller? Have you fed him something weird?
Oh no, he just used to be a dog.
Now he's a moose, so...
Hahah, right. I don't know why I remembered him being smaller.
Maybe you were thinking of him the way he was as a little baby moose.
He was way smaller back then.
Hey, sit down and eat! We're on a break.
No thanks.
Ville, don't get comfy. Get up!
What? Nooo! I'm so hungry! And my legs hurt! Maybe.
I've been walking for so long, and it was so cold!
I just want to eat and rest a little bit, and you won't let me!
It's because you don't love meeee! Owowo-*woooo!!!*
Fine, *fine!* We can stay for a second! Just... stop crying, please!
Yaay!
Hold on, I'll get us some more buns.

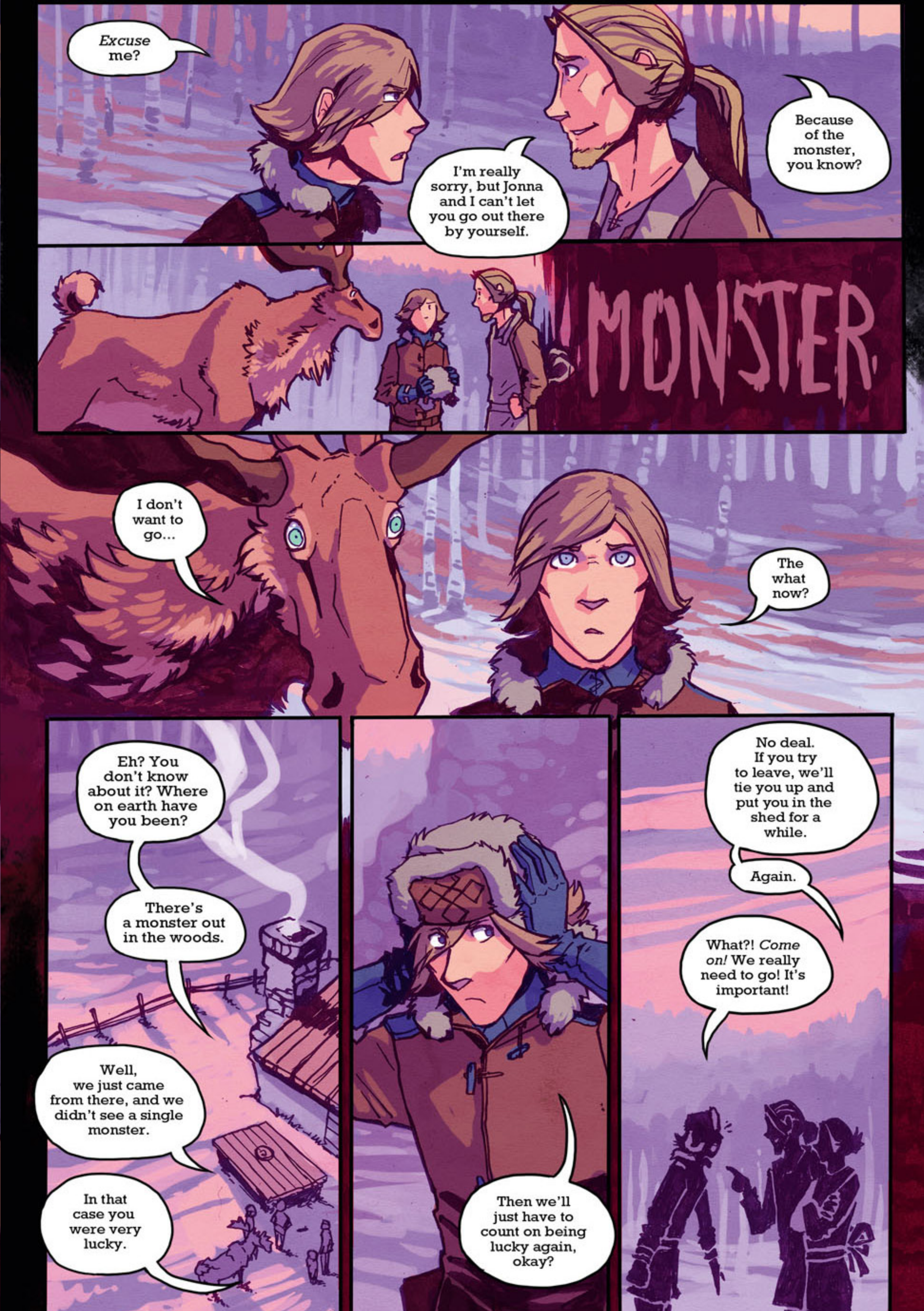

Get me some extra crispy ones.
None of that undercooked dough you people seem to enjoy so much.
I know, I know.
So, what are you doing here? Isn't it your day off?
I have a hard time believing you would turn up to work for a voluntary extra shift.
You're right about that.
Are you sure you don't want to help out, though?
Overtime pays really well, and we have a ton of stuff to bake.
No thanks. First of all: I don't want to. Secondly: I'm kind of looking for someone.
Oh? Who?
So I'm a hat rack now?
I'm not really sure. They probably have a moose with them. Have you seen anyone like that around?
I don't think so...

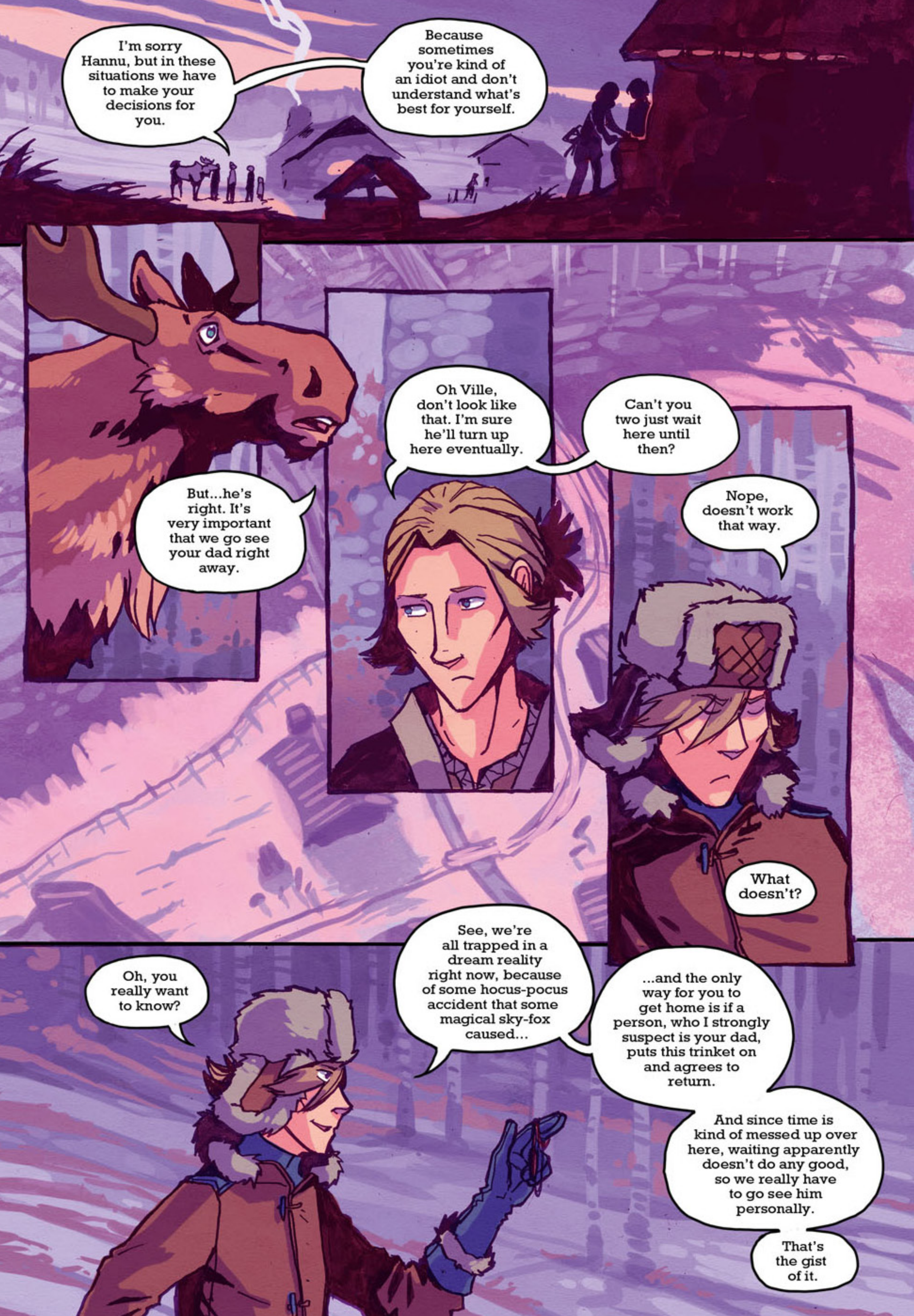

Siiri! Have you seen a moose around here somewhere?
There's one right there!
No, another one!
Can't say I have.
Here you go; two disgusting, burnt pieces from the trash pile, exactly as you like them.
Thanks.
And here you go, you little fluffy-puffy you. ~❤~
Thank you so much!
Hannu is looking for someone else with a moose.
Really? Why?
I have my reasons. If they're not here, I guess we'll be leaving.
I don't want to run into your dad and be pressured into that extra work shift.
Whoa, wait! Your *dad,* where is he?
Not here.
Where, then?
Um... hello there.
Could you go away, please? I don't want to play with you.

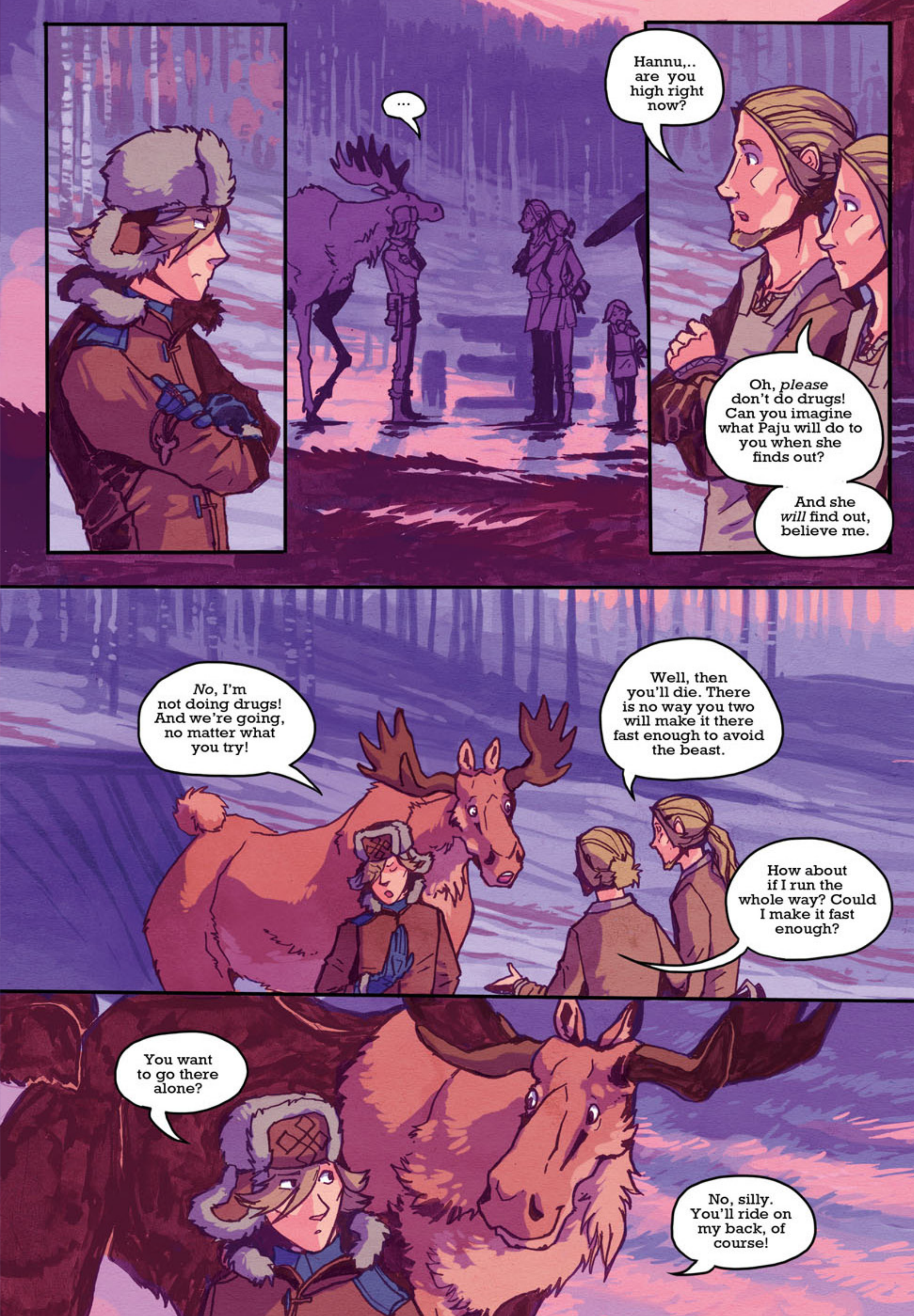

He's managing the store, I think, so we haven't seen him in a while.
Eeee!
And where is the store?
Out in the woods, the road north leads straight to it.
Is it far away?
Ten kilometers, maybe? Not *that* far away.
It's kind of far.
AAUUUGH!!!

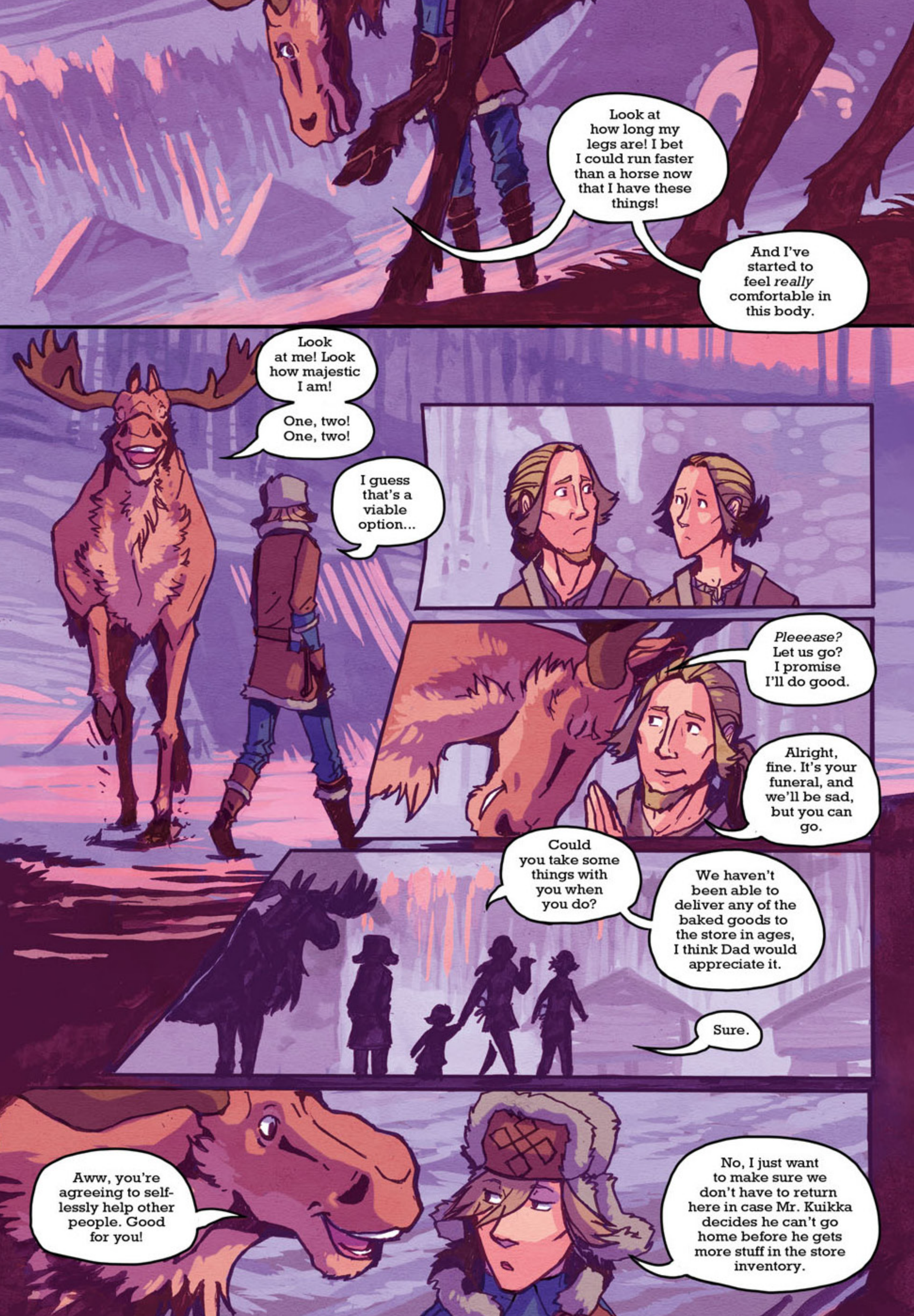

Whoa, halt!
You little *monster!* I'm going to rip *your* ears off and *eat them!*
Owow-owoo!
Iaa!
How about we all calm down and don't assault little children, okay?
Hrrgrrh!
She is evil and she deserves to *die!*
What is wrong with you?! Oona just wanted to play with Ville! Sometimes children don't know when they're being too rough.
Waah!

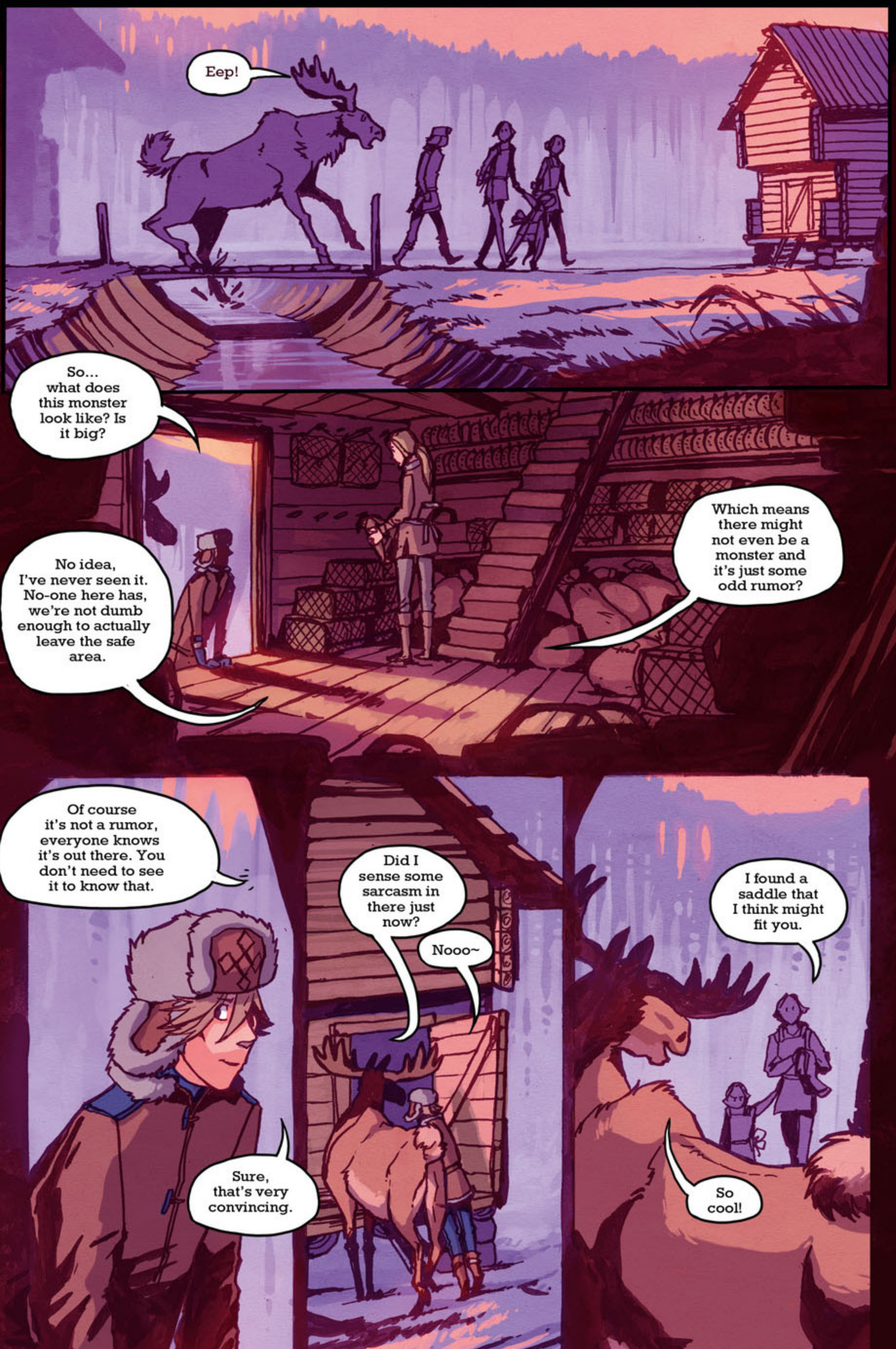

Bah, children that age know exactly where to draw the line, and they are mean on purpose.
And you know that because you used to be such a mean kid?
We're leaving. Ville, come on!
Thank you for your company, it was not enjoyable.
Come on, don't be a brat.
I'll be a brat if I want to, but we really do need to get going.
It's probably going to take over an hour to walk there. Is the road in decent condition, or what's the situation?
It's probably fine, but it doesn't really matter. You're going to stay here with us.

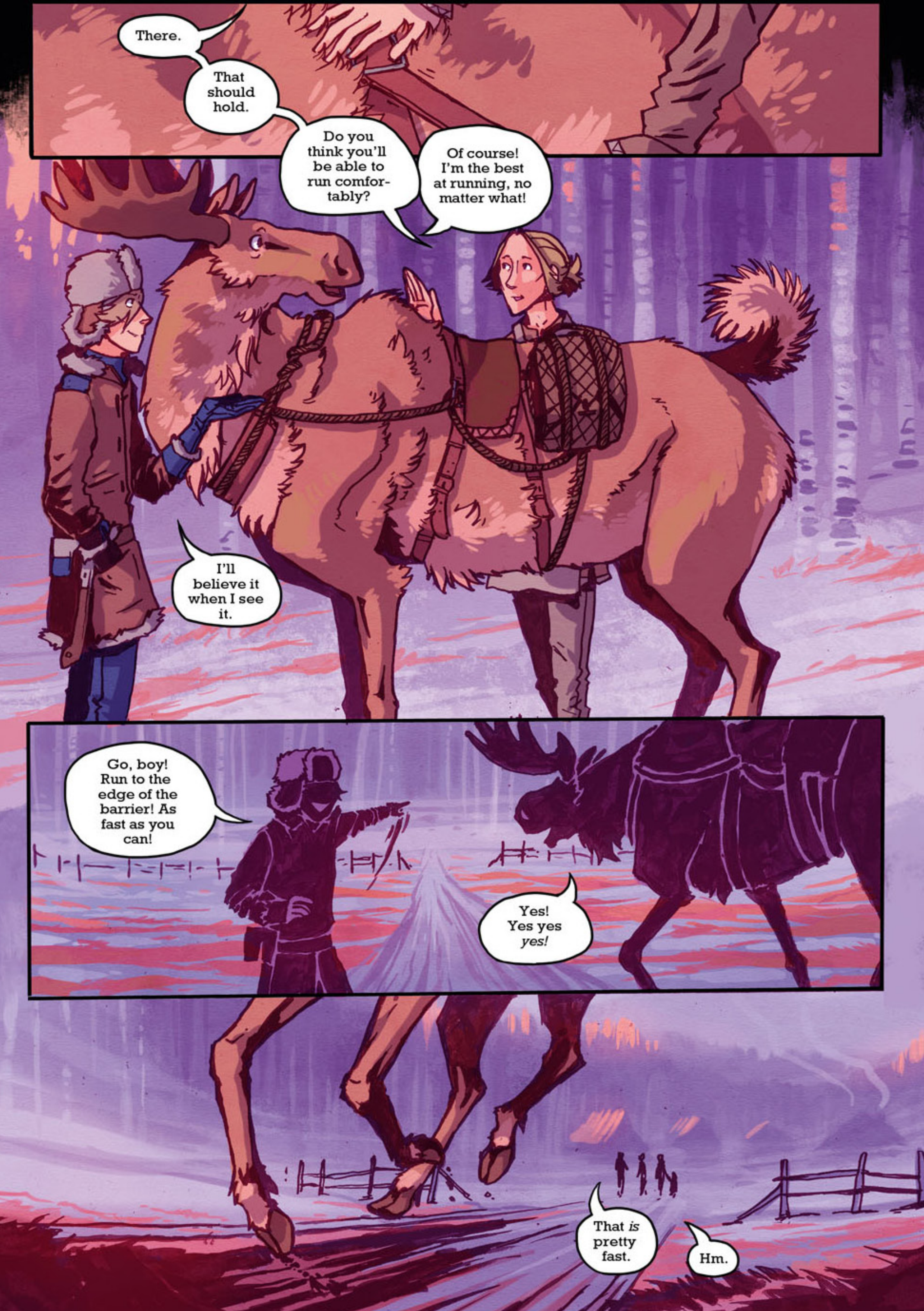

Excuse me?
I'm really sorry, but Jonna and I can't let you go out there by yourself.
Because of the monster, you know?
MONSTER.
I don't want to go...
The what now?
Eh? You don't know about it? Where on earth have you been?
There's a monster out in the woods.
Well, we just came from there, and we didn't see a single monster.
In that case you were very lucky.
Then we'll just have to count on being lucky again, okay?
No deal. If you try to leave, we'll tie you up and put you in the shed for a while.
Again.
What?! *Come on!* We really need to go! It's important!

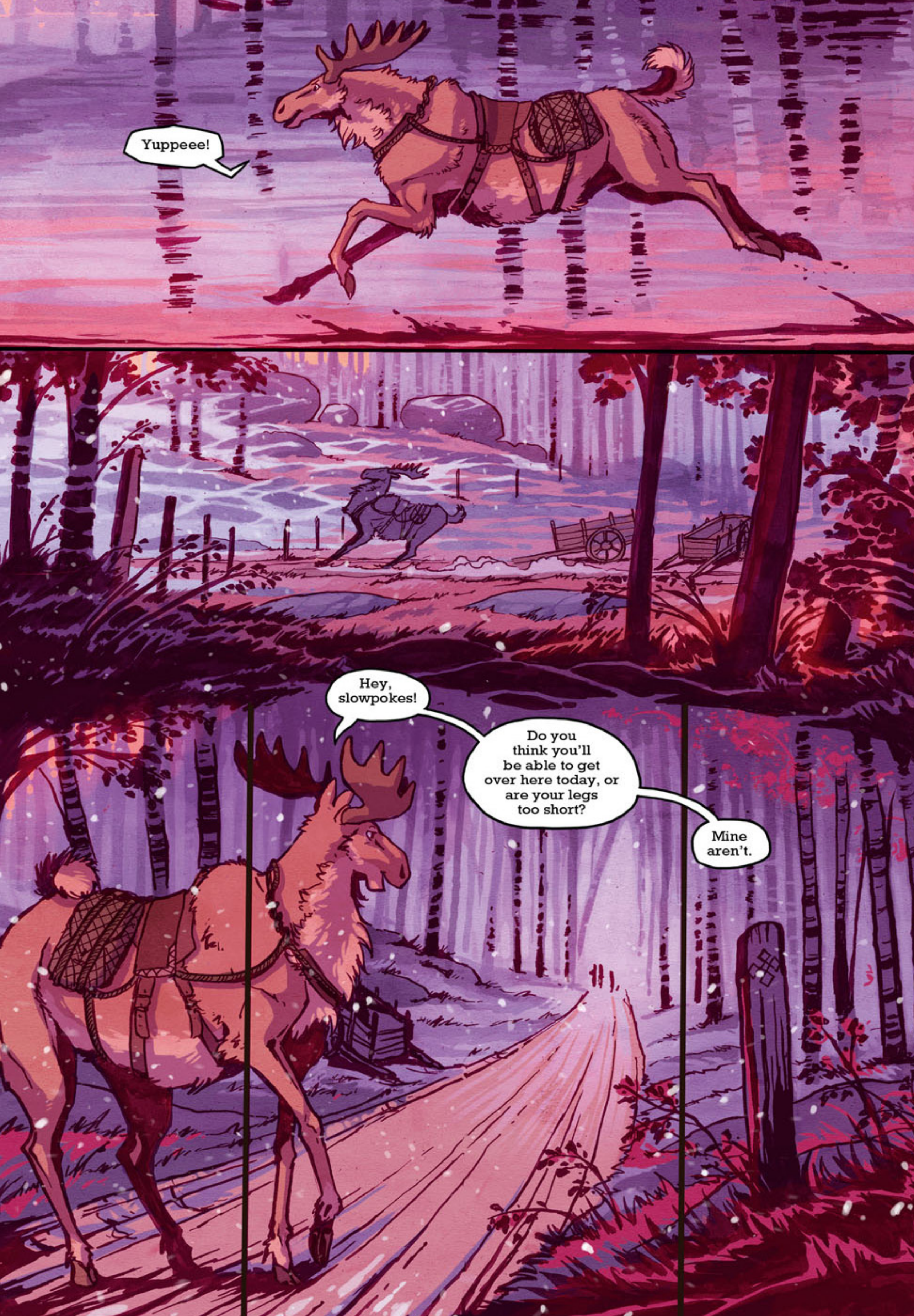

I'm sorry Hannu, but in these situations we have to make your decisions for you.
Because sometimes you're kind of an idiot and don't understand what's best for yourself.
But...he's right. It's very important that we go see your dad right away.
Oh Ville, don't look like that. I'm sure he'll turn up here eventually.
Can't you two just wait here until then?
Nope, doesn't work that way.
What doesn't?
Oh, you really want to know?
See, we're all trapped in a dream reality right now, because of some hocus-pocus accident that some magical sky-fox caused...
...and the only way for you to get home is if a person, who I strongly suspect is your dad, puts this trinket on and agrees to return.
And since time is kind of messed up over here, waiting apparently doesn't do any good, so we really have to go see him personally.
That's the gist of it.

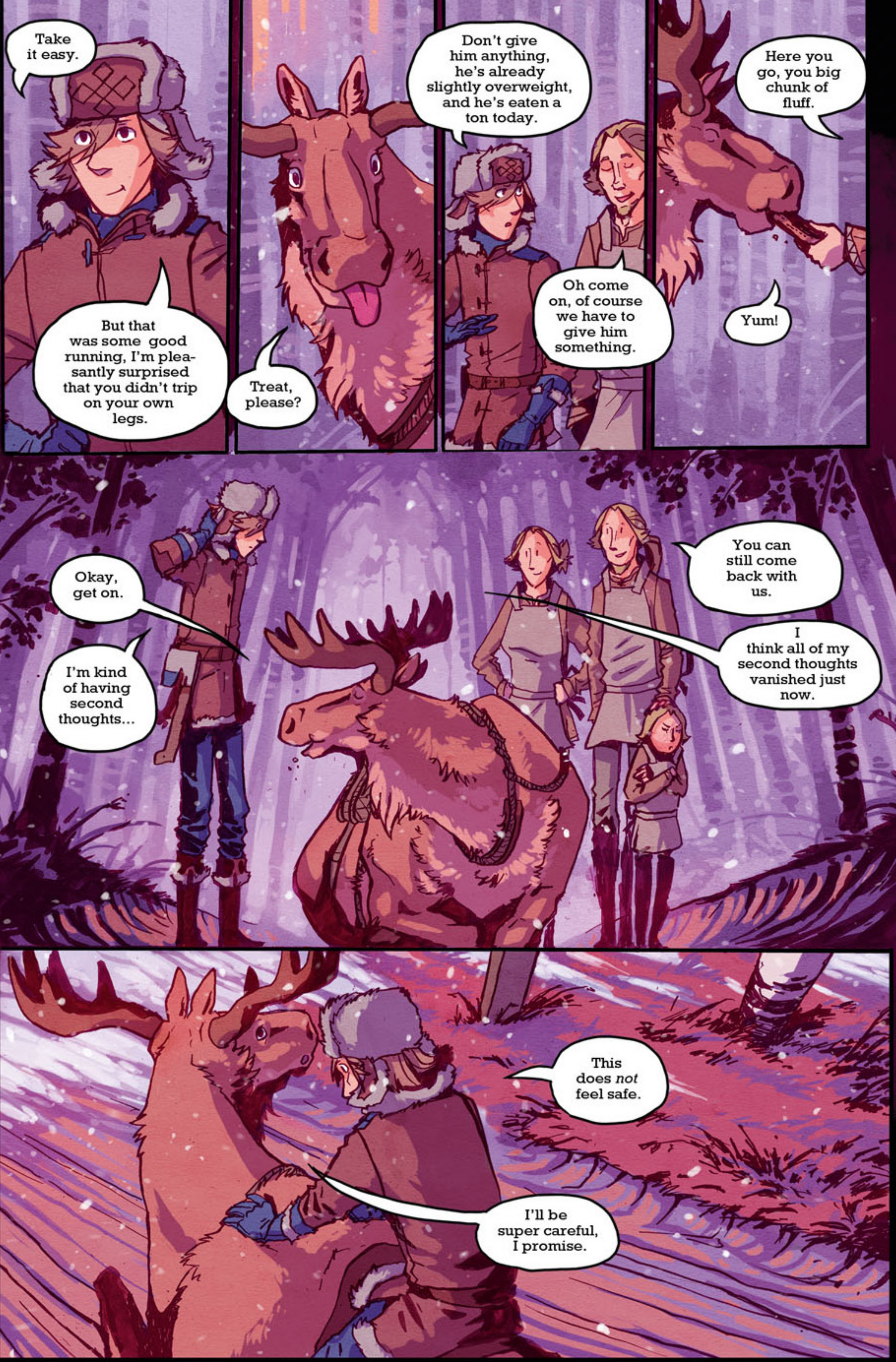

...
Hannu,.. are you high right now?
Oh, *please* don't do drugs! Can you imagine what Paju will do to you when she finds out?
And she *will* find out, believe me.
No, I'm not doing drugs! And we're going, no matter what you try!
Well, then you'll die. There is no way you two will make it there fast enough to avoid the beast.
How about if I run the whole way? Could I make it fast enough?
You want to go there alone?
No, silly. You'll ride on my back, of course!

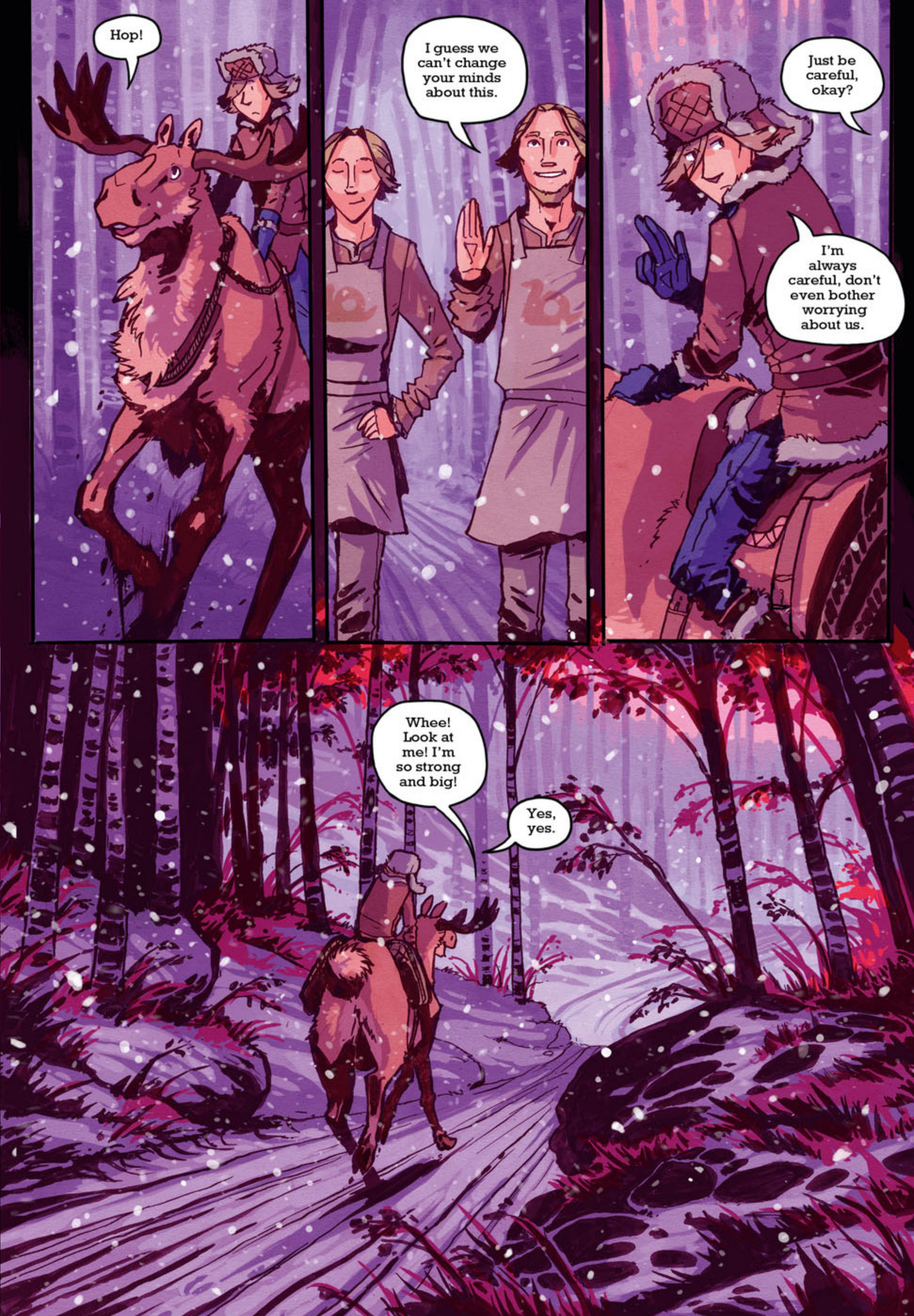

Look at how long my legs are! I bet I could run faster than a horse now that I have these things!
And I've started to feel *really* comfortable in this body.
Look at me! Look how majestic I am!
One, two! One, two!
I guess that's a viable option...
Pleeease? Let us go? I promise I'll do good.
Alright, fine. It's your funeral, and we'll be sad, but you can go.
Could you take some things with you when you do?
We haven't been able to deliver any of the baked goods to the store in ages, I think Dad would appreciate it.
Sure.
Aww, you're agreeing to selflessly help other people. Good for you!
No, I just want to make sure we don't have to return here in case Mr. Kuikka decides he can't go home before he gets more stuff in the store inventory.

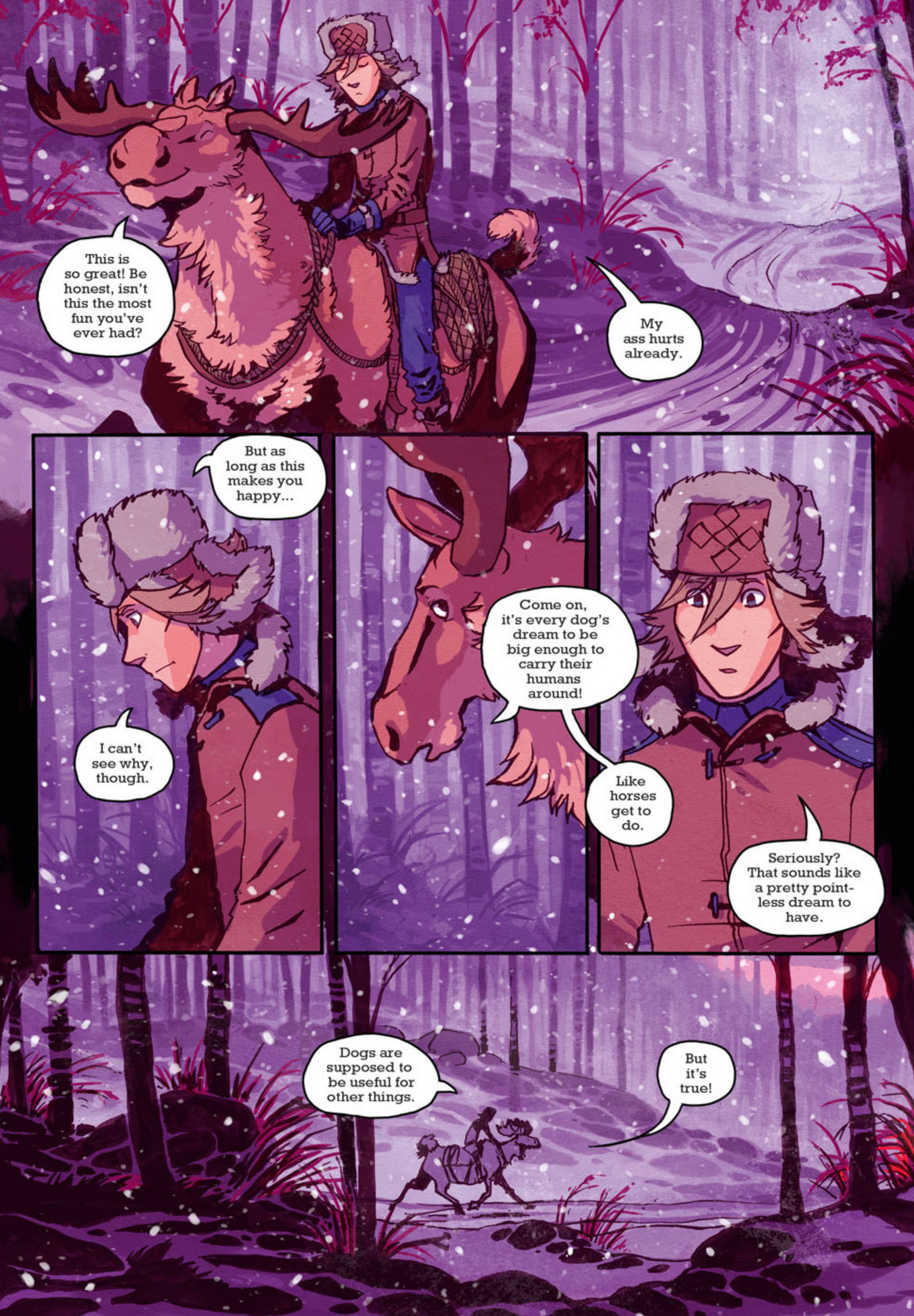

Eep!
So... what does this monster look like? Is it big?
No idea, I've never seen it. No-one here has, we're not dumb enough to actually leave the safe area.
Which means there might not even be a monster and it's just some odd rumor?
Of course it's not a rumor, everyone knows it's out there. You don't need to see it to know that.
Sure, that's very convincing.
Did I sense some sarcasm in there just now?
Nooo~
I found a saddle that I think might fit you.
So cool!

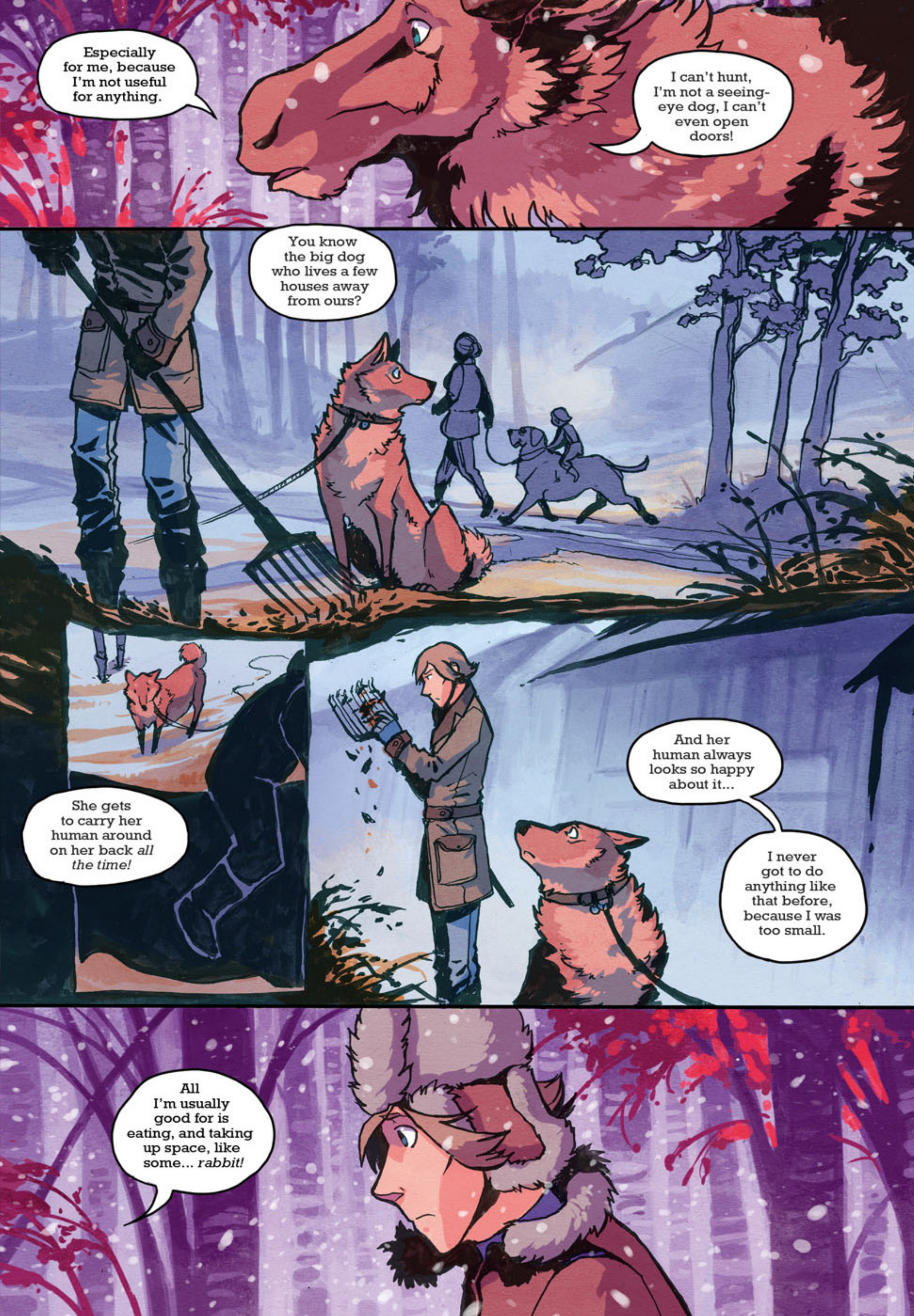

There.
That should hold.
Do you think you'll be able to run comfortably?
Of course! I'm the best at running, no matter what!
I'll believe it when I see it.
Go, boy! Run to the edge of the barrier! As fast as you can!
Yes! Yes yes *yes!*
That *is* pretty fast.
Hm.

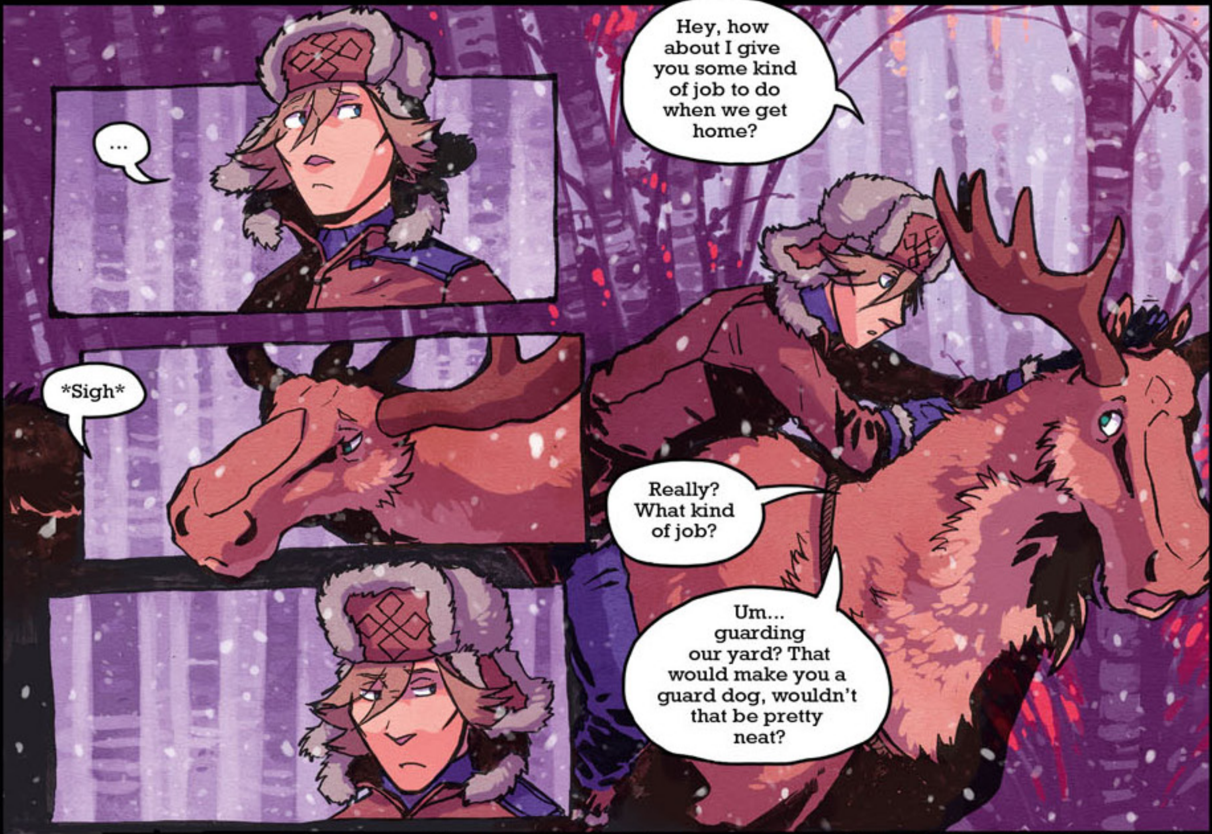

Yuppeee!
Hey, slowpokes!
Do you think you'll be able to get over here today, or are your legs too short?
Mine aren't.

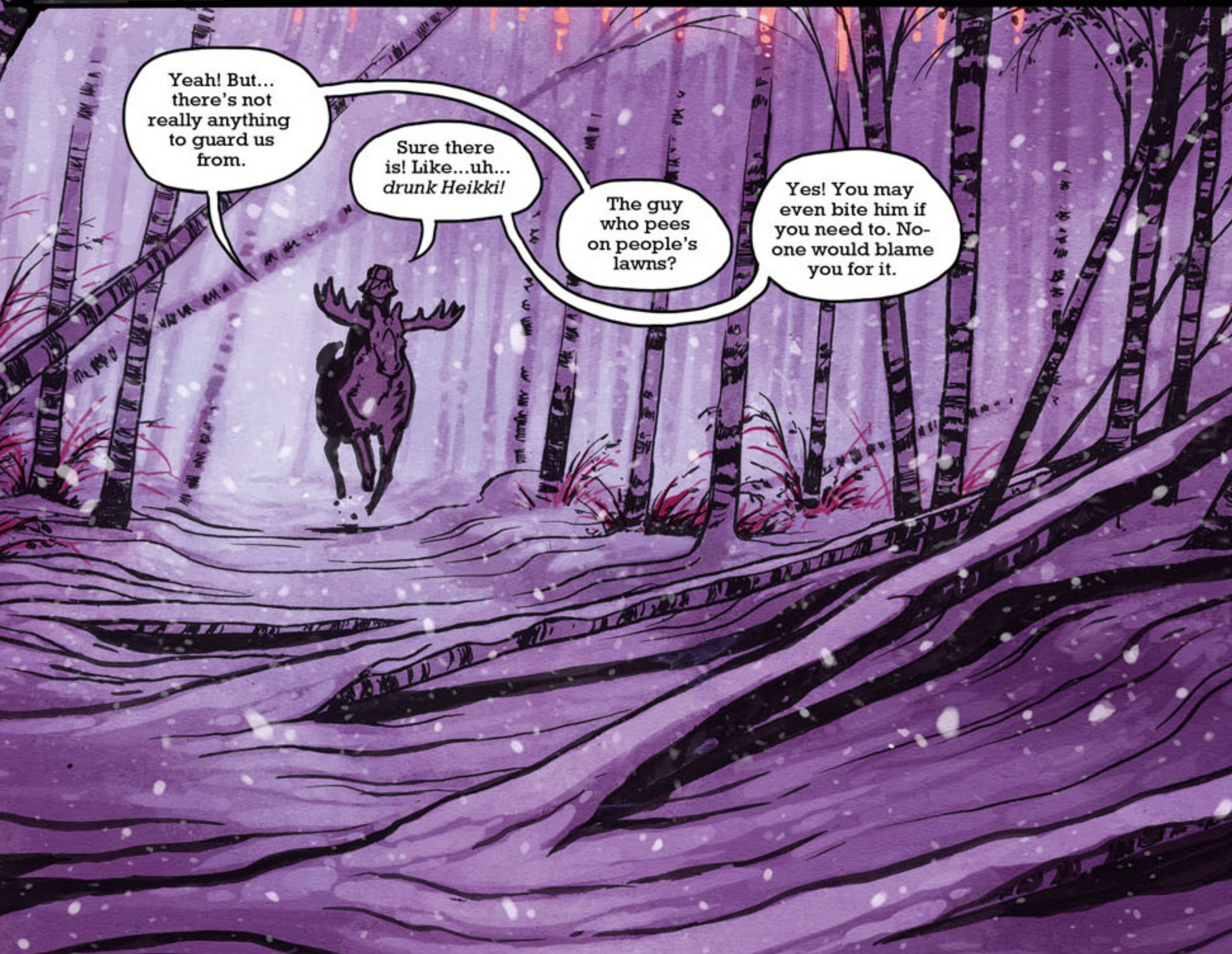

Take it easy.
But that was some good running, I'm pleasantly surprised that you didn't trip on your own legs.
Treat, please?
Don't give him anything, he's already slightly overweight, and he's eaten a ton today.
Oh come on, of course we have to give him something.
Here you go, you big chunk of fluff.
Yum!
Okay, get on.
I'm kind of having second thoughts...
You can still come back with us.
I think all of my second thoughts vanished just now.
This does *not* feel safe.
I'll be super careful, I promise.

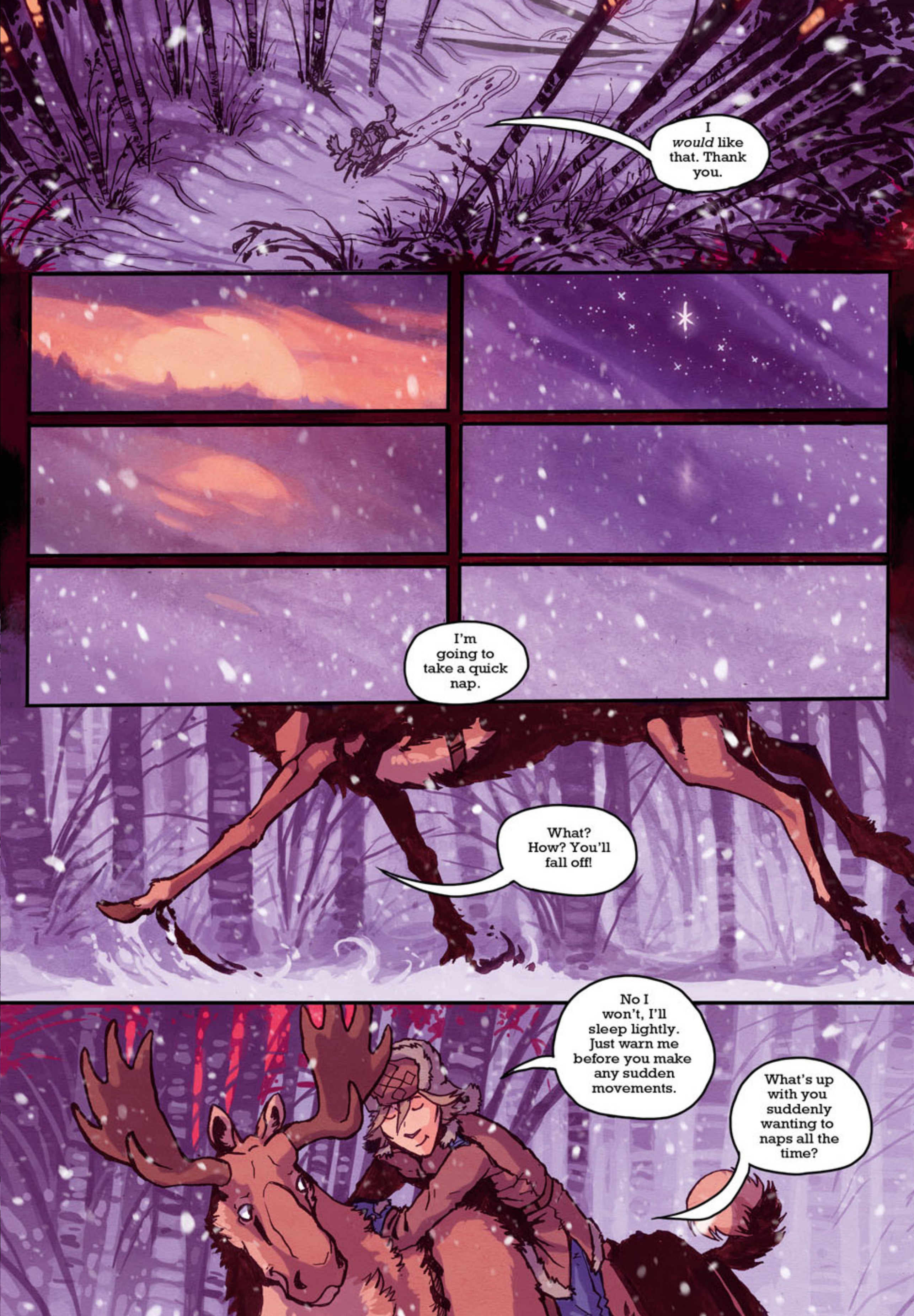

Hop!
I guess we can't change your minds about this.
Just be careful, okay?
I'm always careful, don't even bother worrying about us.
Whee! Look at me! I'm so strong and big!
Yes, yes.

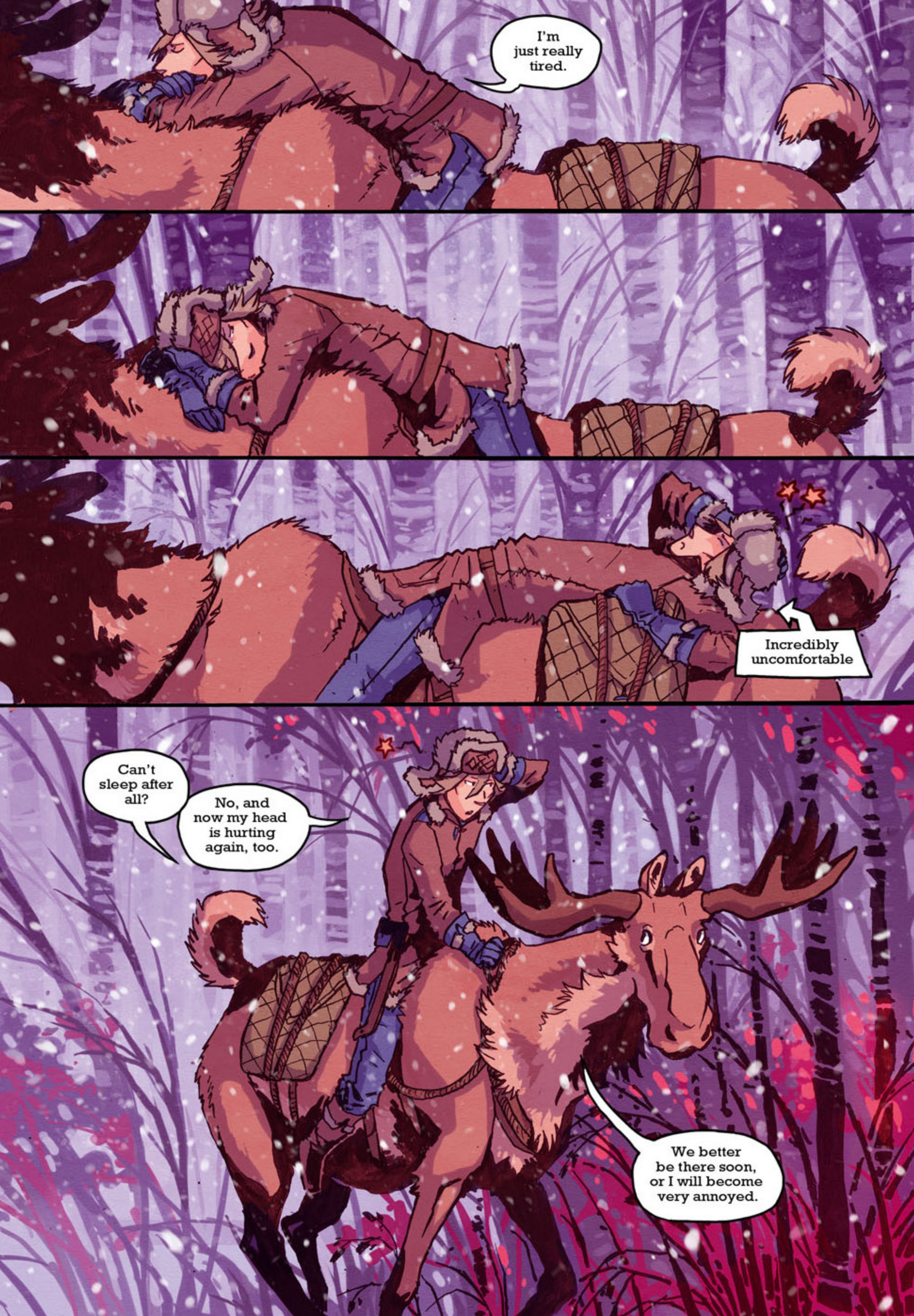

This is so great! Be honest, isn't this the most fun you've ever had?
My ass hurts already.
But as long as this makes you happy...
I can't see why, though.
Come on, it's every dog's dream to be big enough to carry their humans around!
Like horses get to do.
Seriously? That sounds like a pretty pointless dream to have.
Dogs are supposed to be useful for other things.
But it's true!

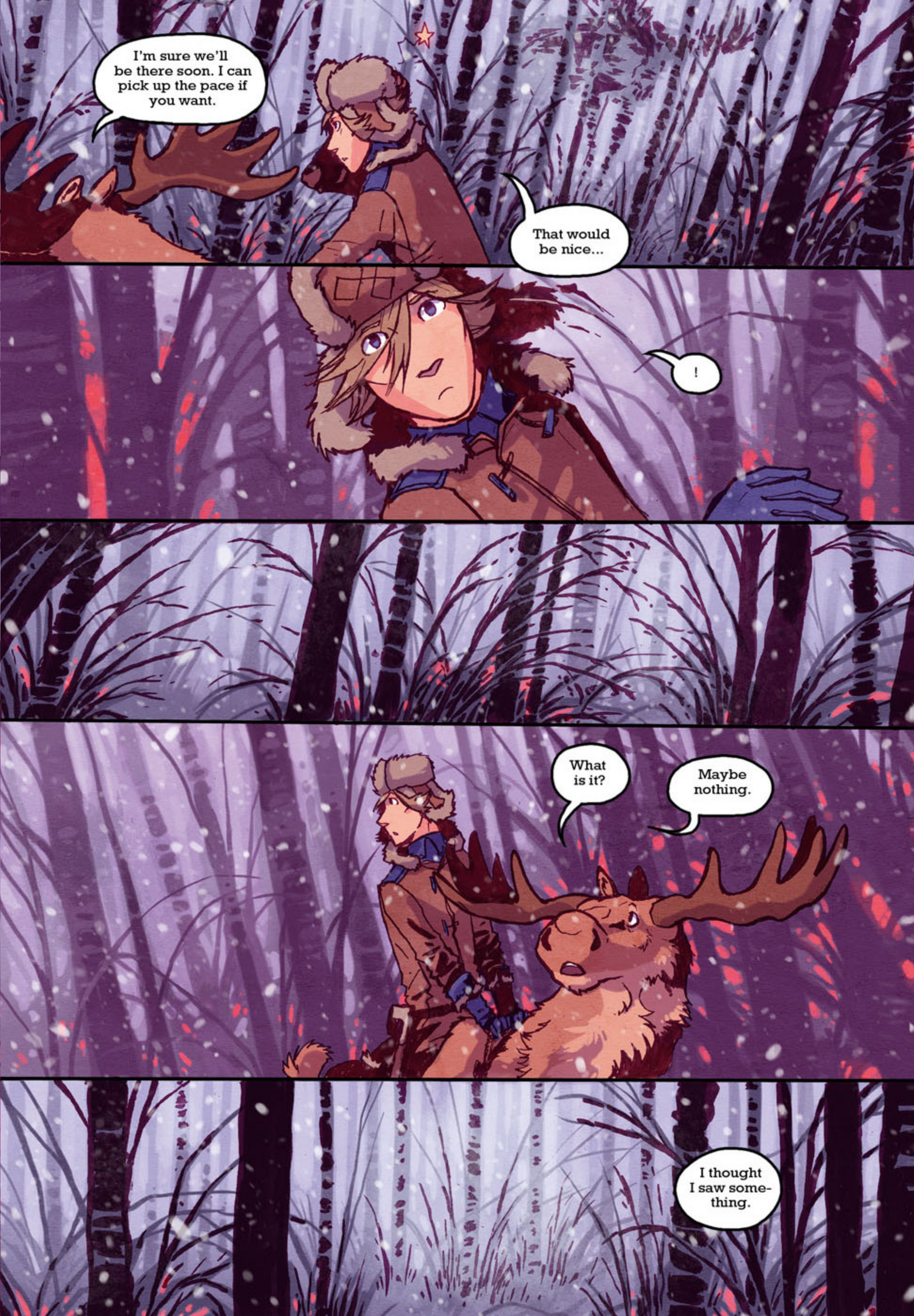

Especially for me, because I'm not useful for anything.
I can't hunt, I'm not a seeing-eye dog, I can't even open doors!
You know the big dog who lives a few houses away from ours?
She gets to carry her human around on her back *all the time!*
And her human always looks so happy about it...
I never got to do anything like that before, because I was too small.
All I'm usually good for is eating, and taking up space, like some... *rabbit!*

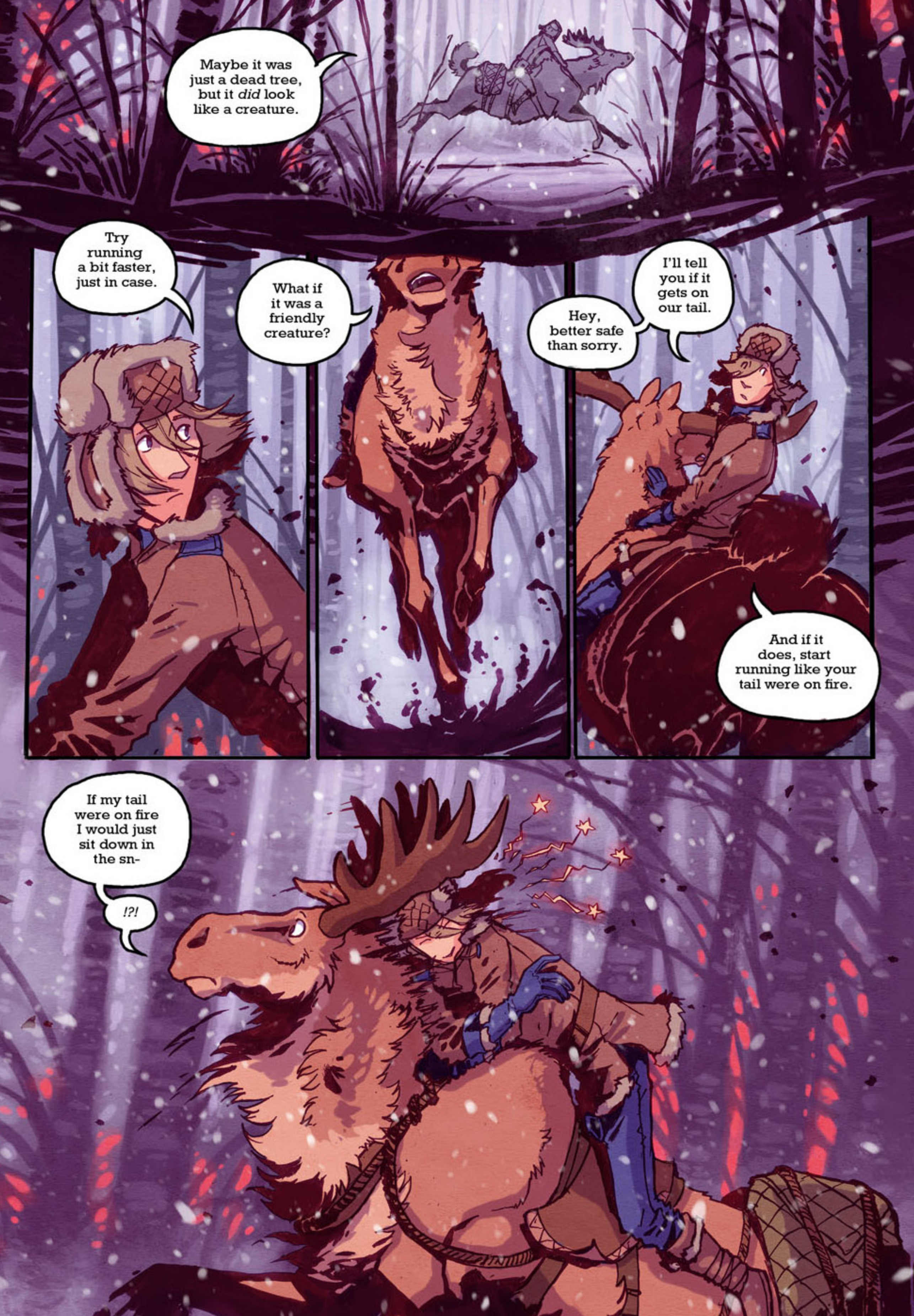

...
Hey, how about I give you some kind of job to do when we get home?
Sigh
Really? What kind of job?
Um... guarding our yard? That would make you a guard dog, wouldn't that be pretty neat?

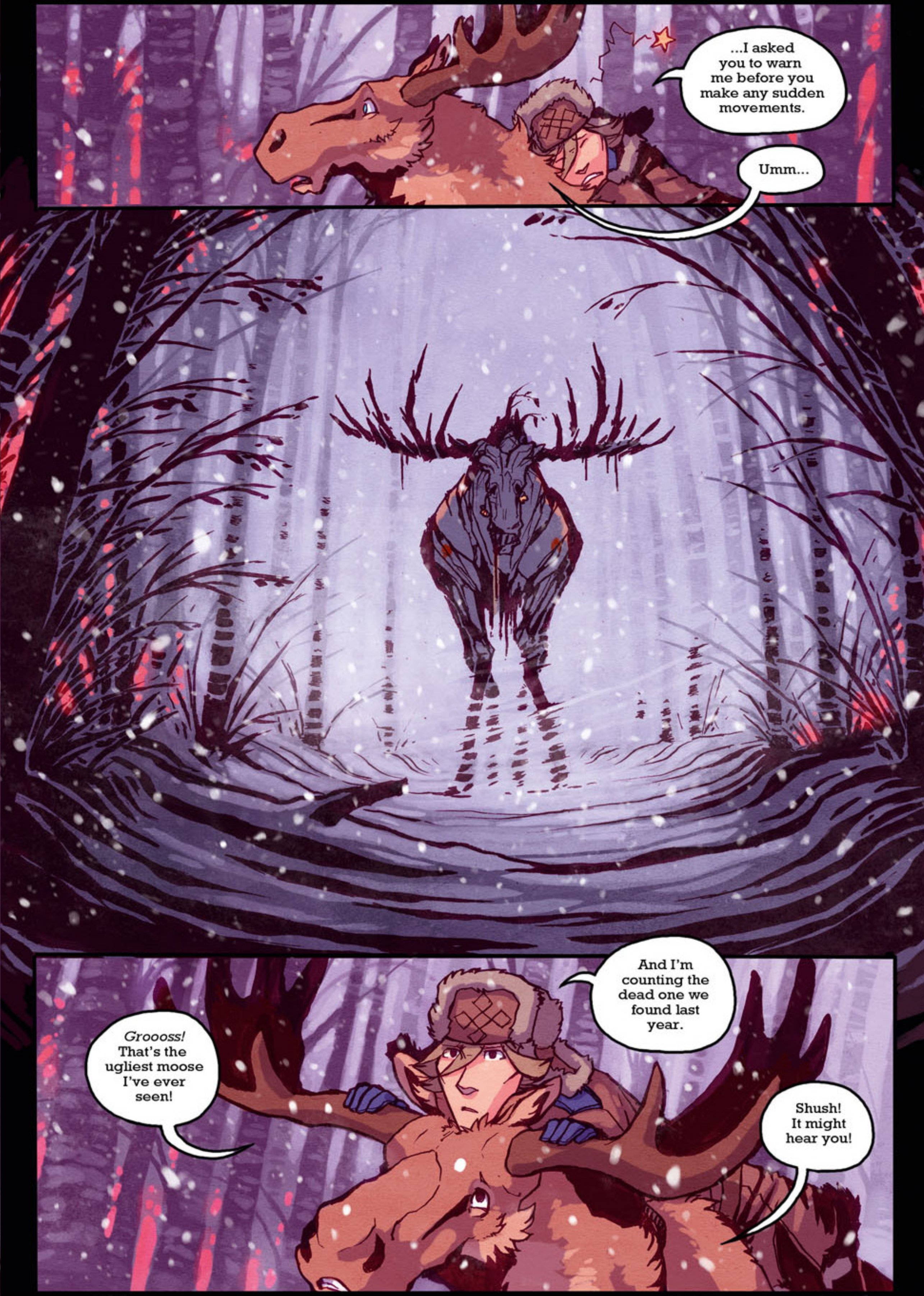

Yeah! But... there's not really anything to guard us from.
Sure there is! Like...uh... *drunk Heikki!*
The guy who pees on people's lawns?
Yes! You may even bite him if you need to. No-one would blame you for it.

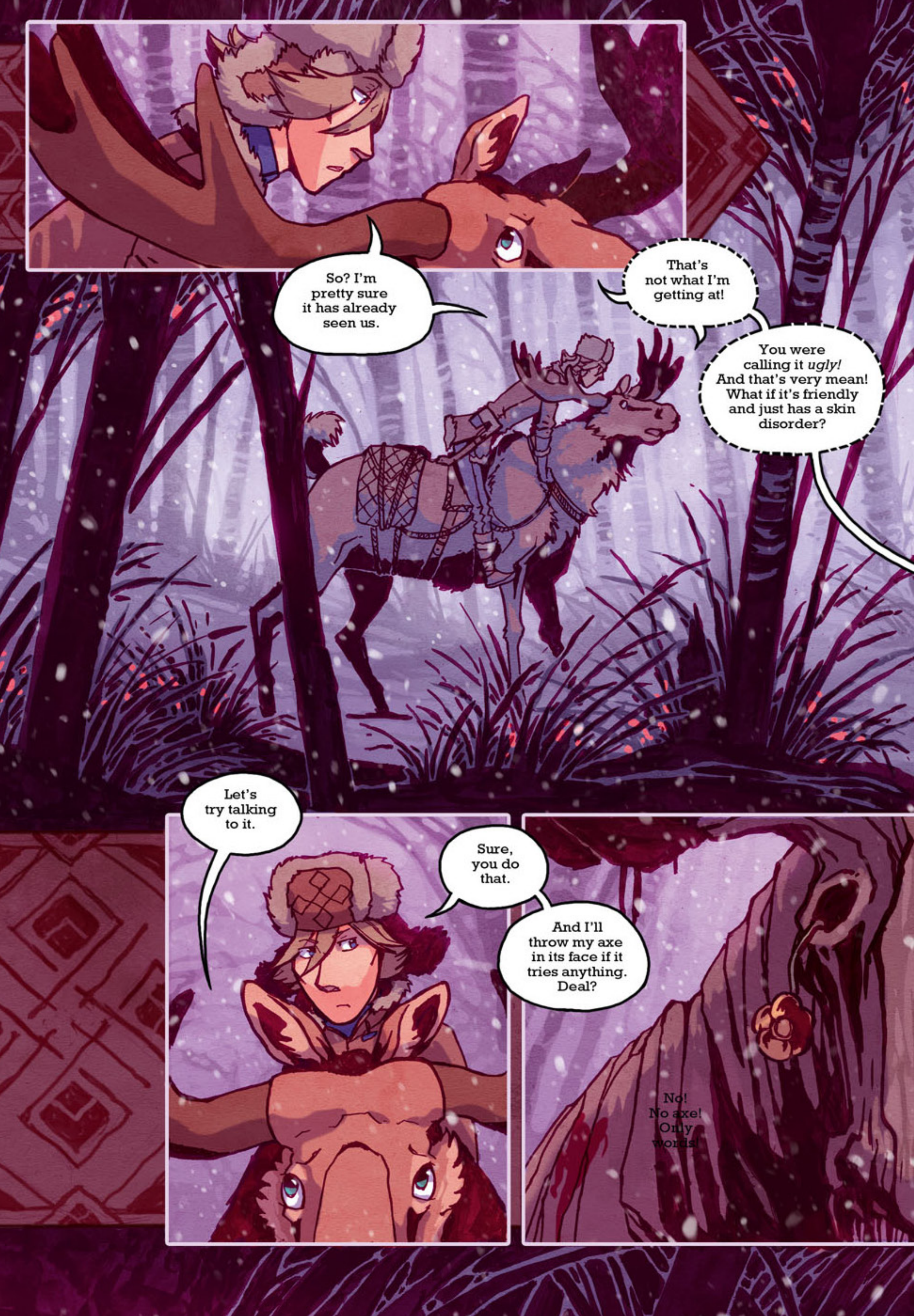

I *would* like that. Thank you.
I'm going to take a quick nap.
What? How? You'll fall off!
No I won't, I'll sleep lightly. Just warn me before you make any sudden movements.
What's up with you suddenly wanting to naps all the time?

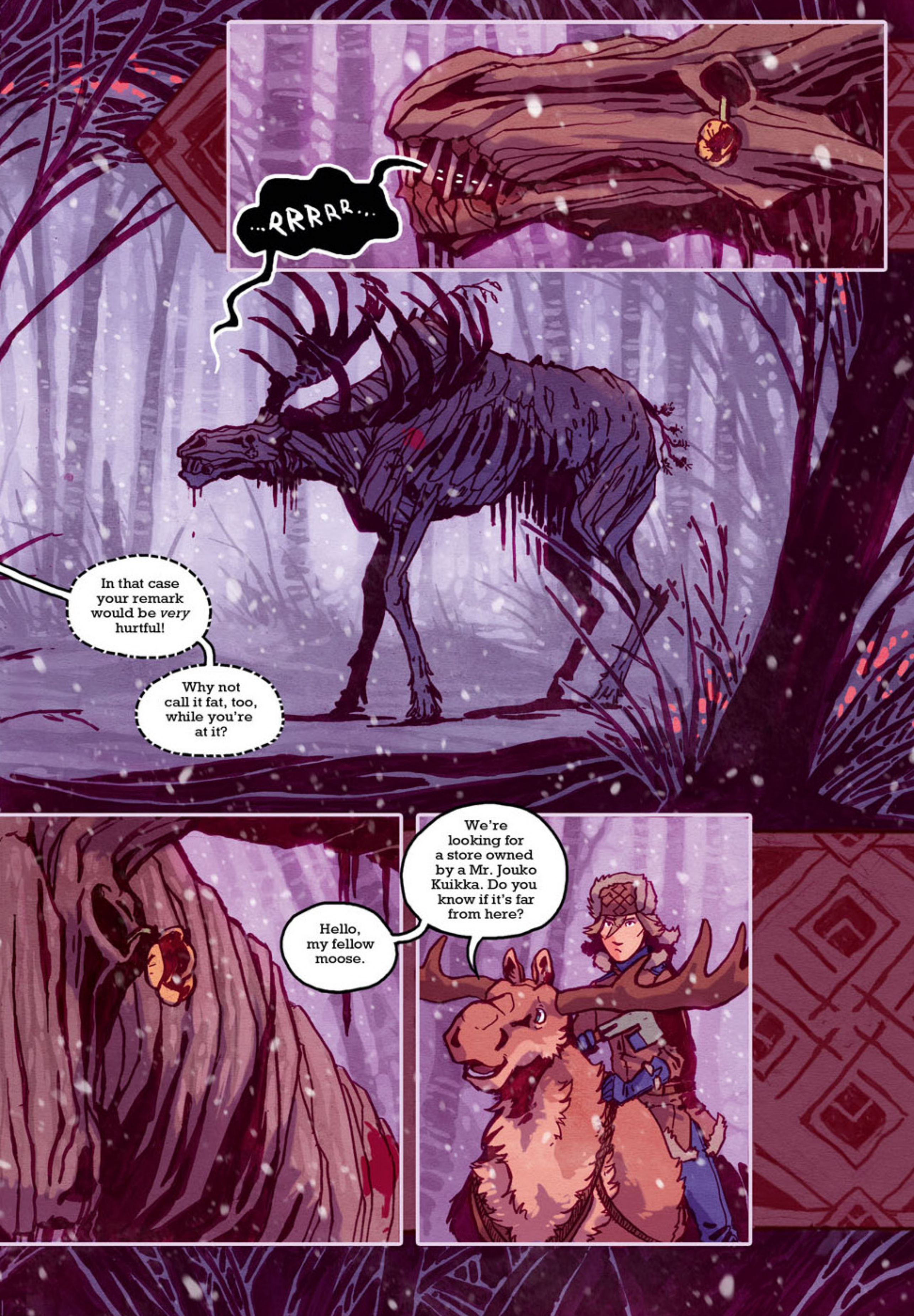

I'm just really tired.
Incredibly uncomfortable
Can't sleep after all?
No, and now my head is hurting again, too.
We better be there soon, or I will become very annoyed.

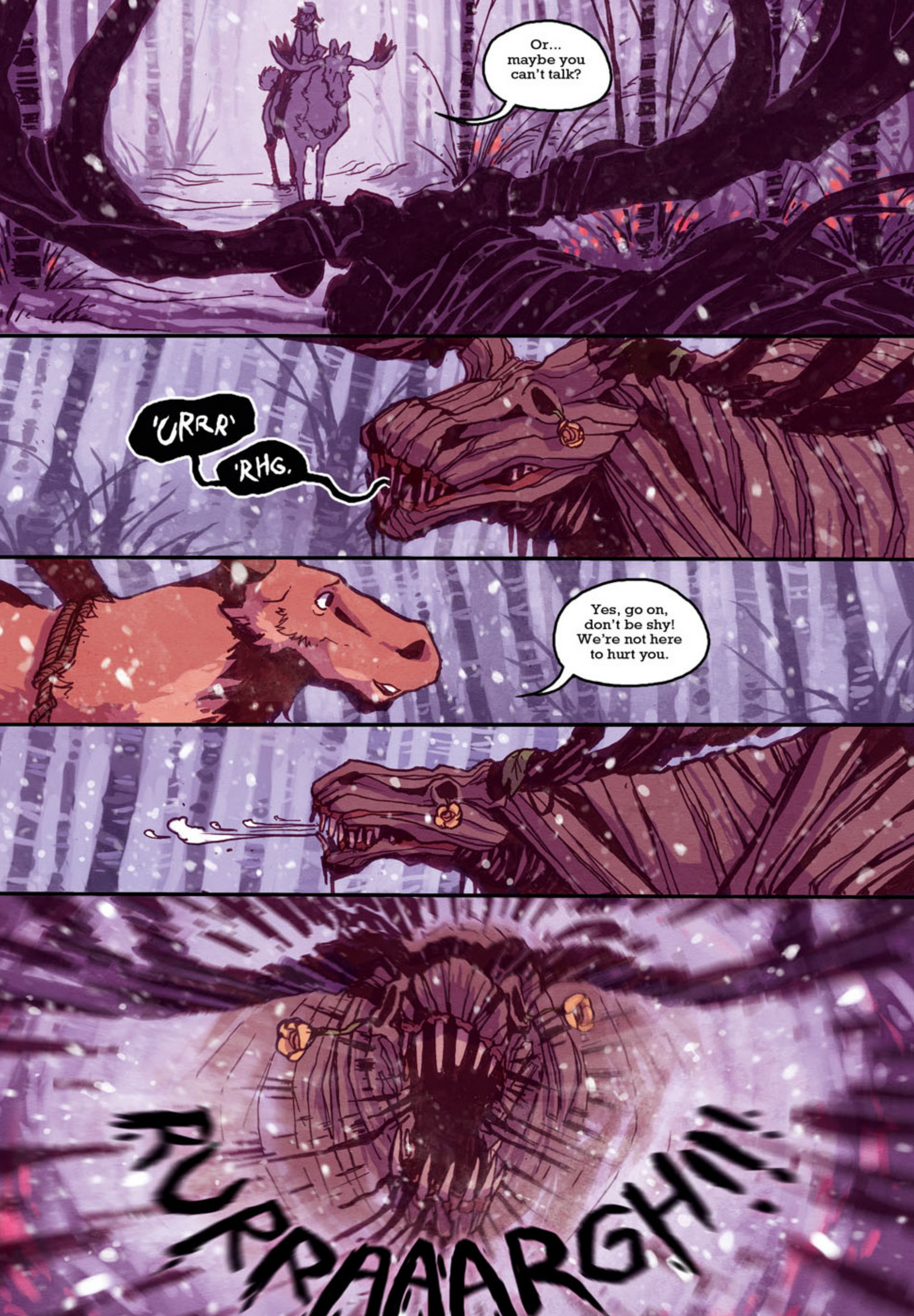

I'm sure we'll be there soon. I can pick up the pace if you want.
That would be nice...
!
What is it?
Maybe nothing.
I thought I saw something.

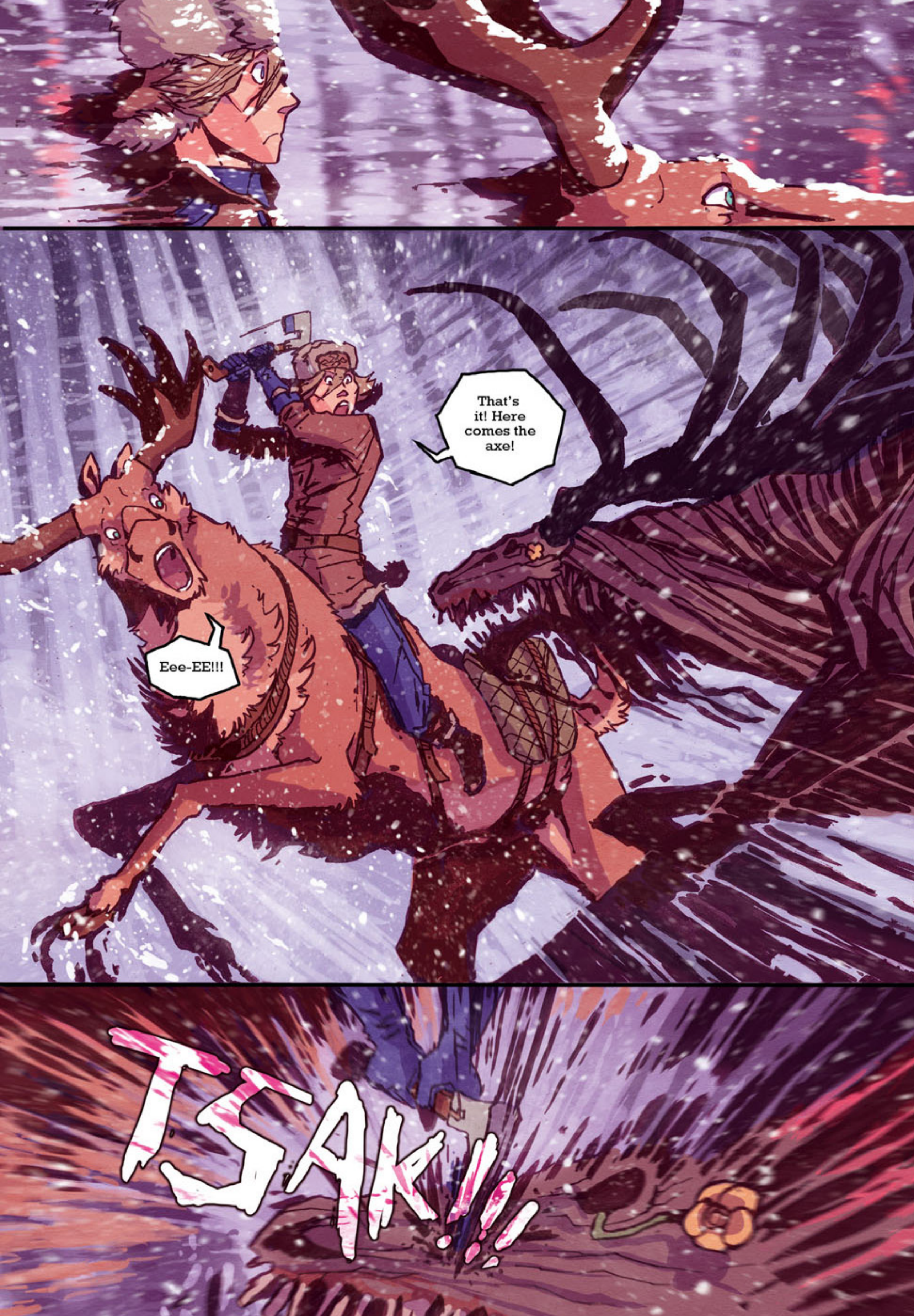

Maybe it was just a dead tree, but it *did* look like a creature.
Try running a bit faster, just in case.
What if it was a friendly creature?
Hey, better safe than sorry.
I'll tell you if it gets on our tail.
And if it does, start running like your tail were on fire.
If my tail were on fire I would just sit down in the sn-
!?!

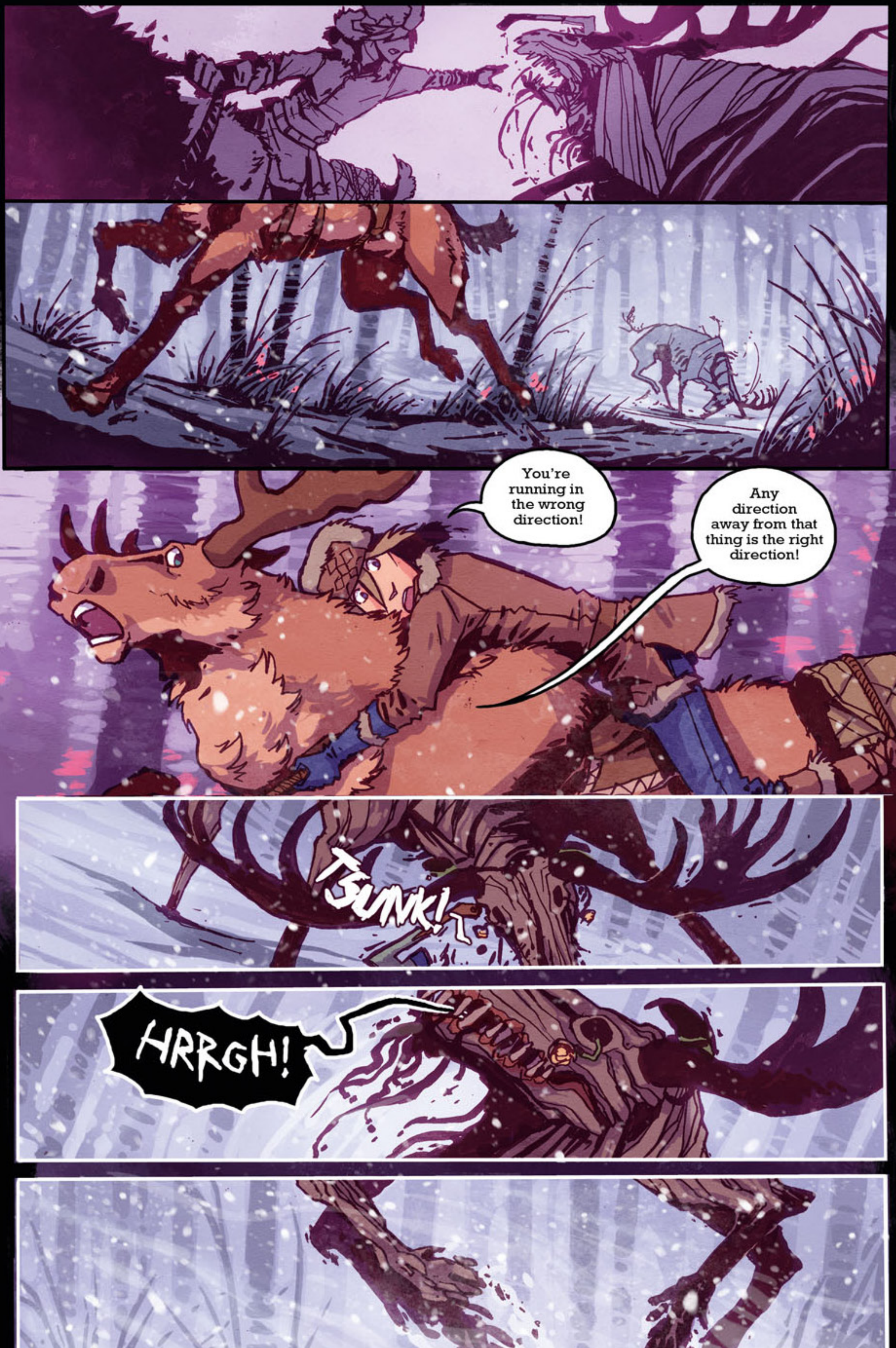

...I asked you to warn me before you make any sudden movements.
Umm...
Groooss! That's the ugliest moose I've ever seen!
And I'm counting the dead one we found last year.
Shush! It might hear you!

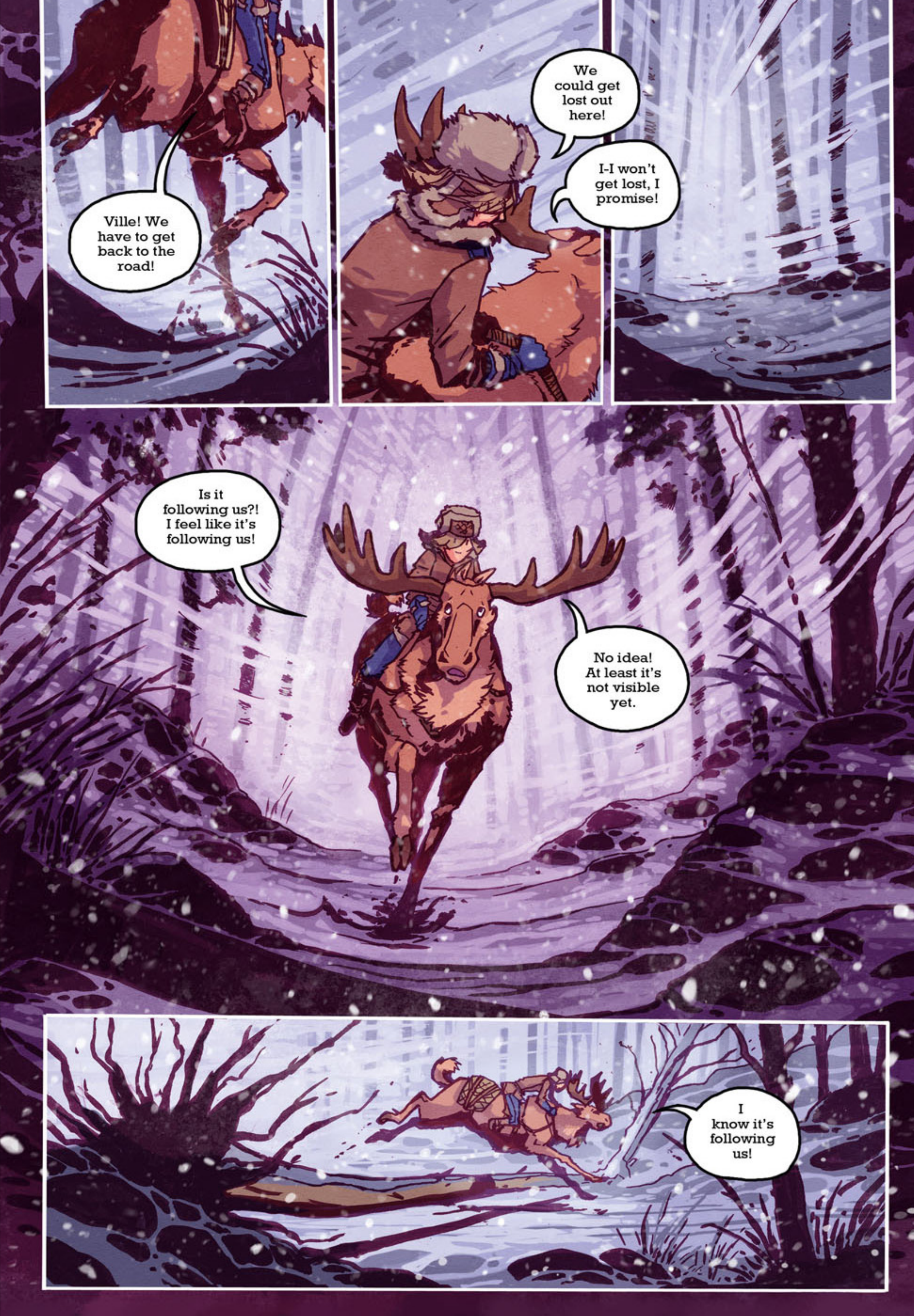

So? I'm pretty sure it has already seen us.
That's not what I'm getting at!
You were calling it *ugly!* And that's very mean! What if it's friendly and just has a skin disorder?
Let's try talking to it.
Sure, you do that.
And I'll throw my axe in its face if it tries anything. Deal?
No! No axe! Only words!

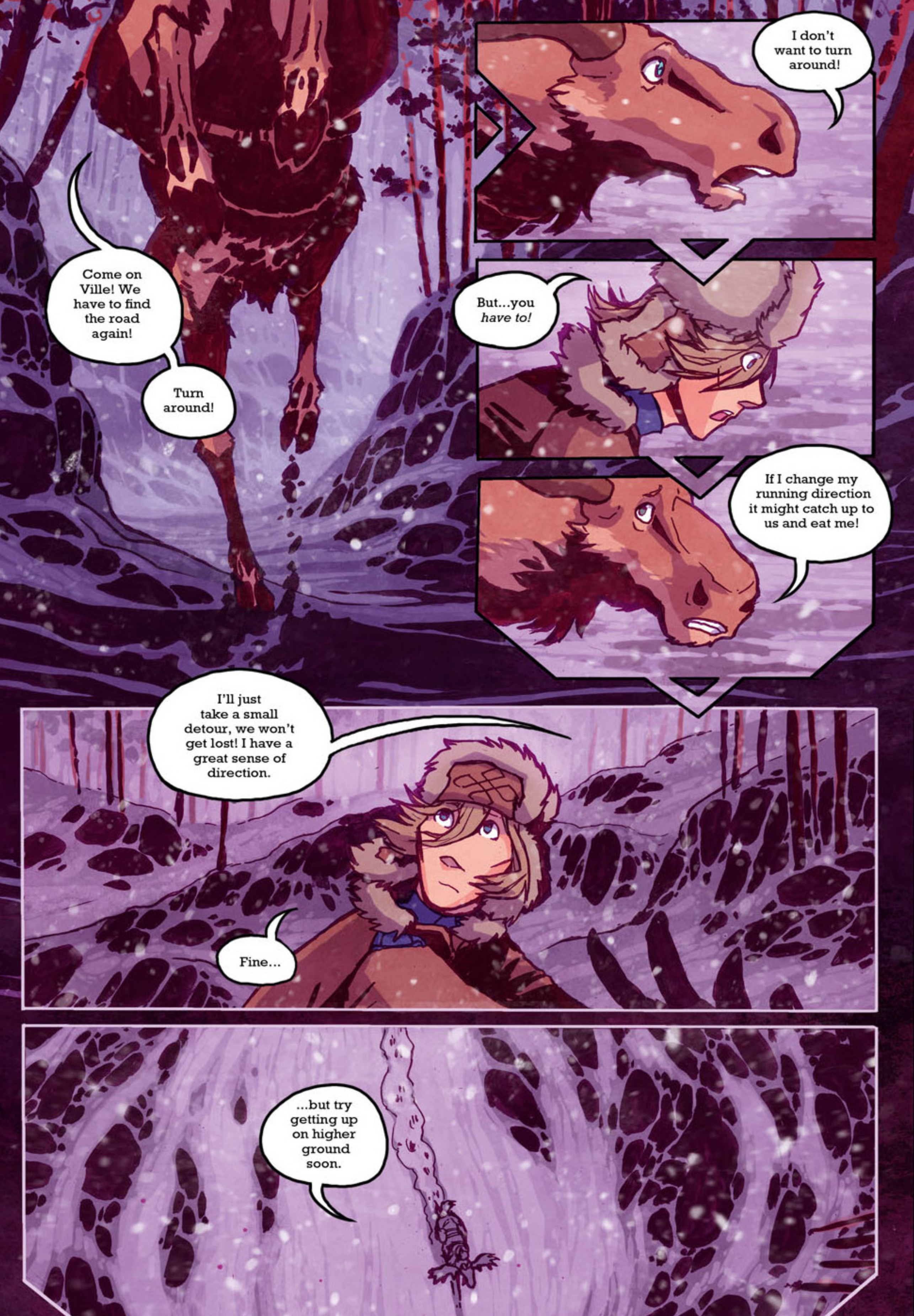

...RRRAR...
In that case your remark would be *very* hurtful!
Why not call it fat, too, while you're at it?
Hello, my fellow moose.
We're looking for a store owned by a Mr. Jouko Kuikka. Do you know if it's far from here?

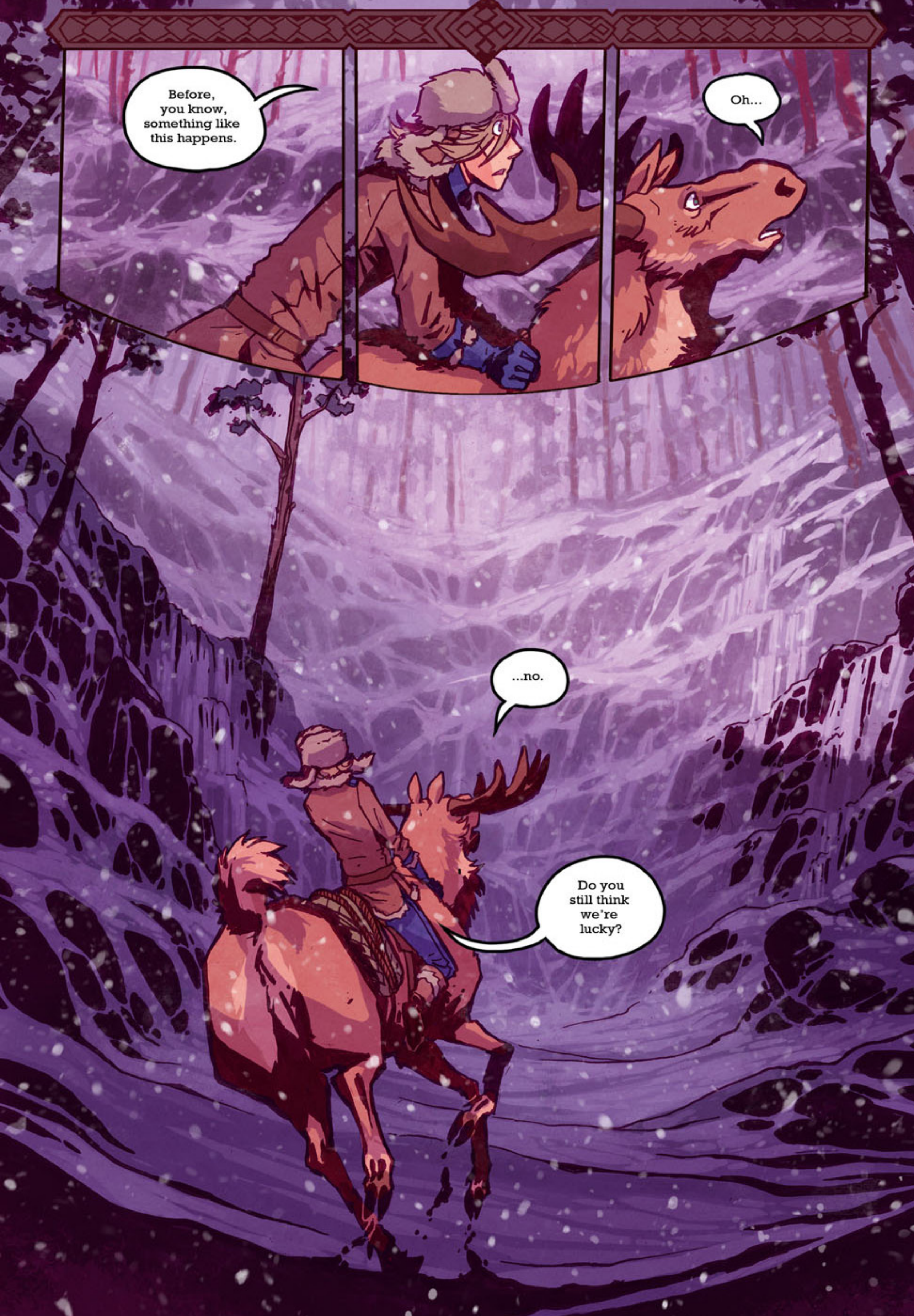

Or... maybe you can't talk?
'URRR'
'RHG.
Yes, go on, don't be shy! We're not here to hurt you.
RURRAAARGH!!

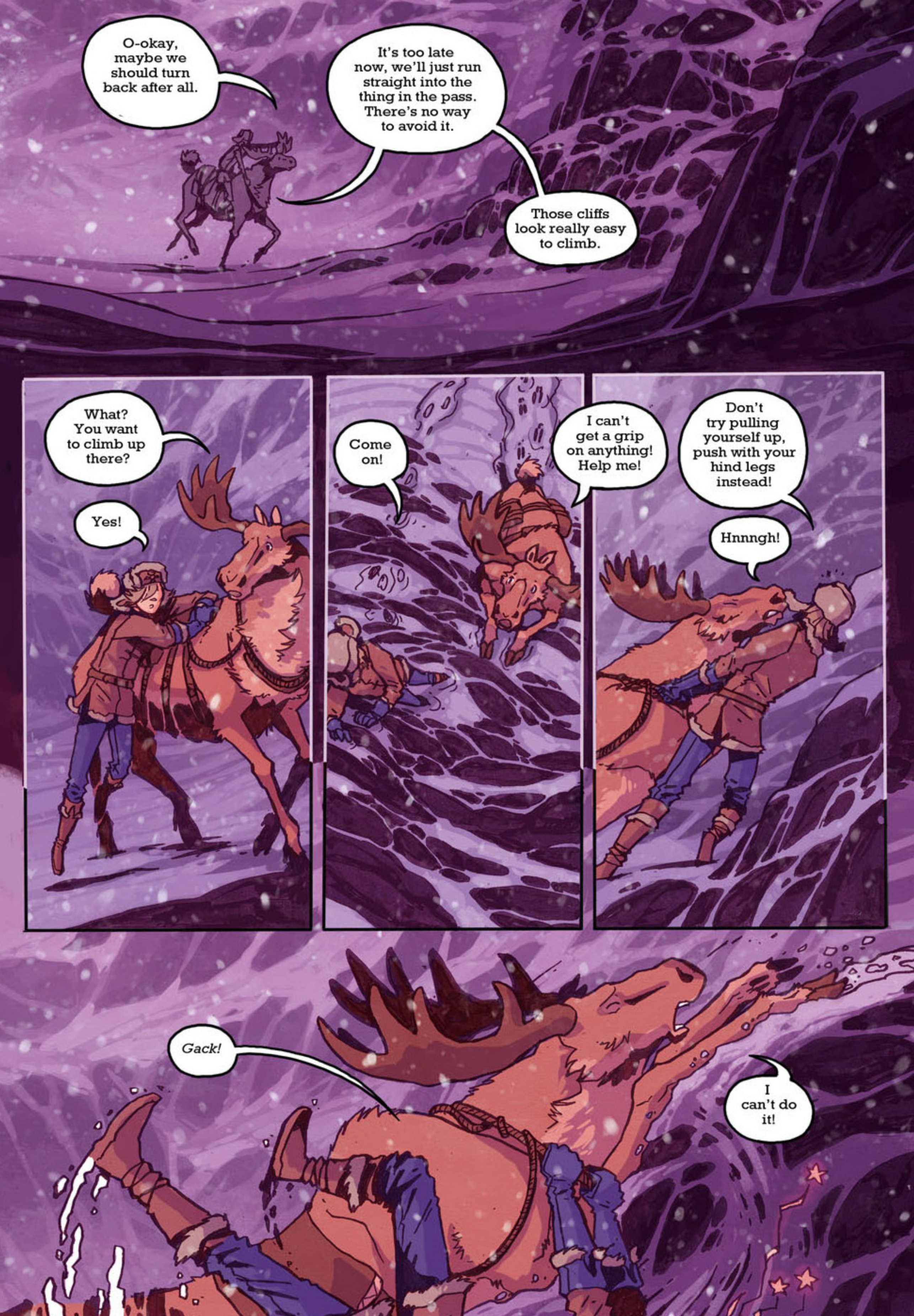

That's it! Here comes the axe!
Eee-EE!!!
TSAK!!!!

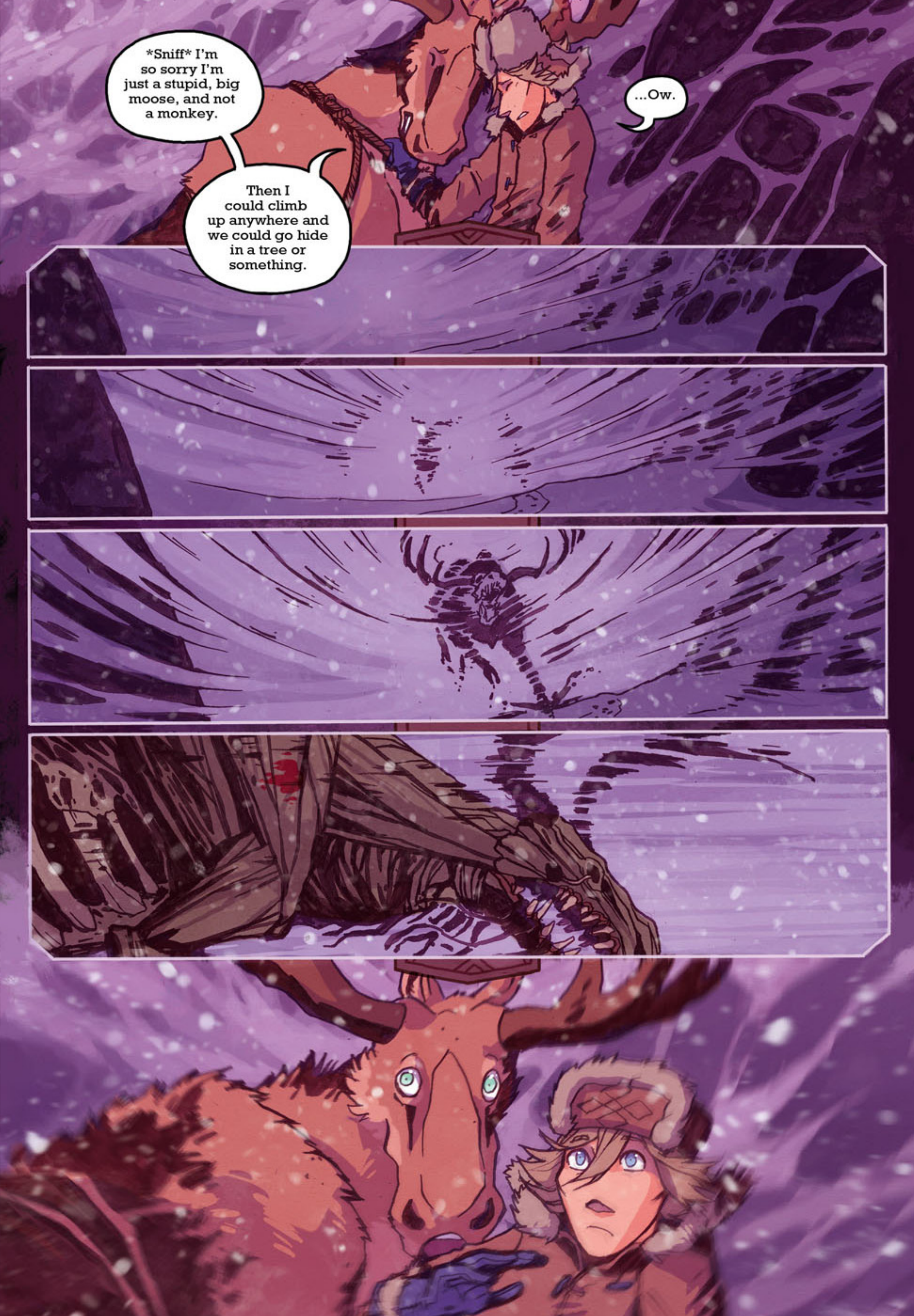

You're running in the wrong direction!
Any direction away from that thing is the right direction!
TSUNK!
HRRGH!

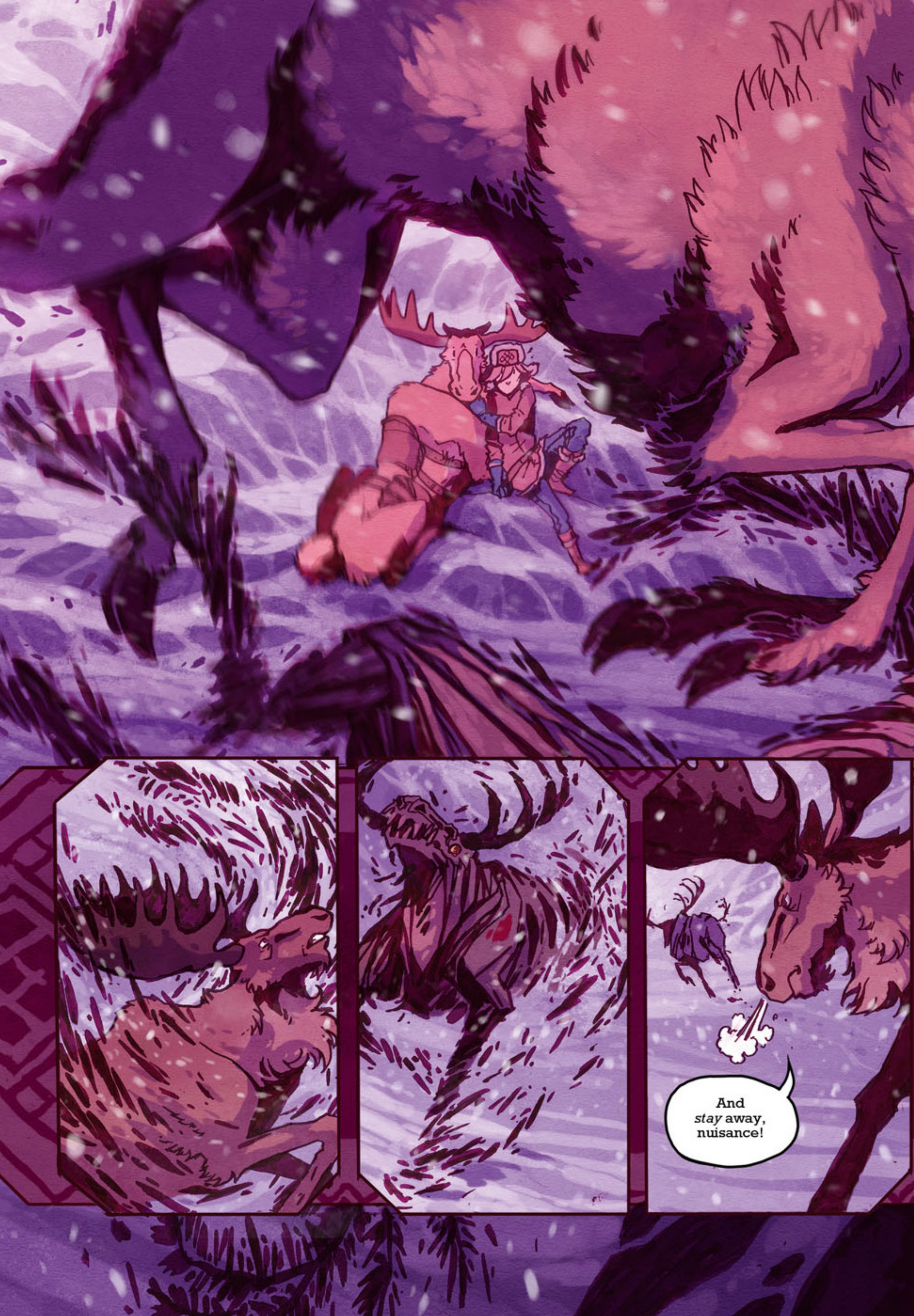

Ville! We have to get back to the road!
We could get lost out here!
I-I won't get lost, I promise!
Is it following us?! I feel like it's following us!
No idea! At least it's not visible yet.
I know it's following us!

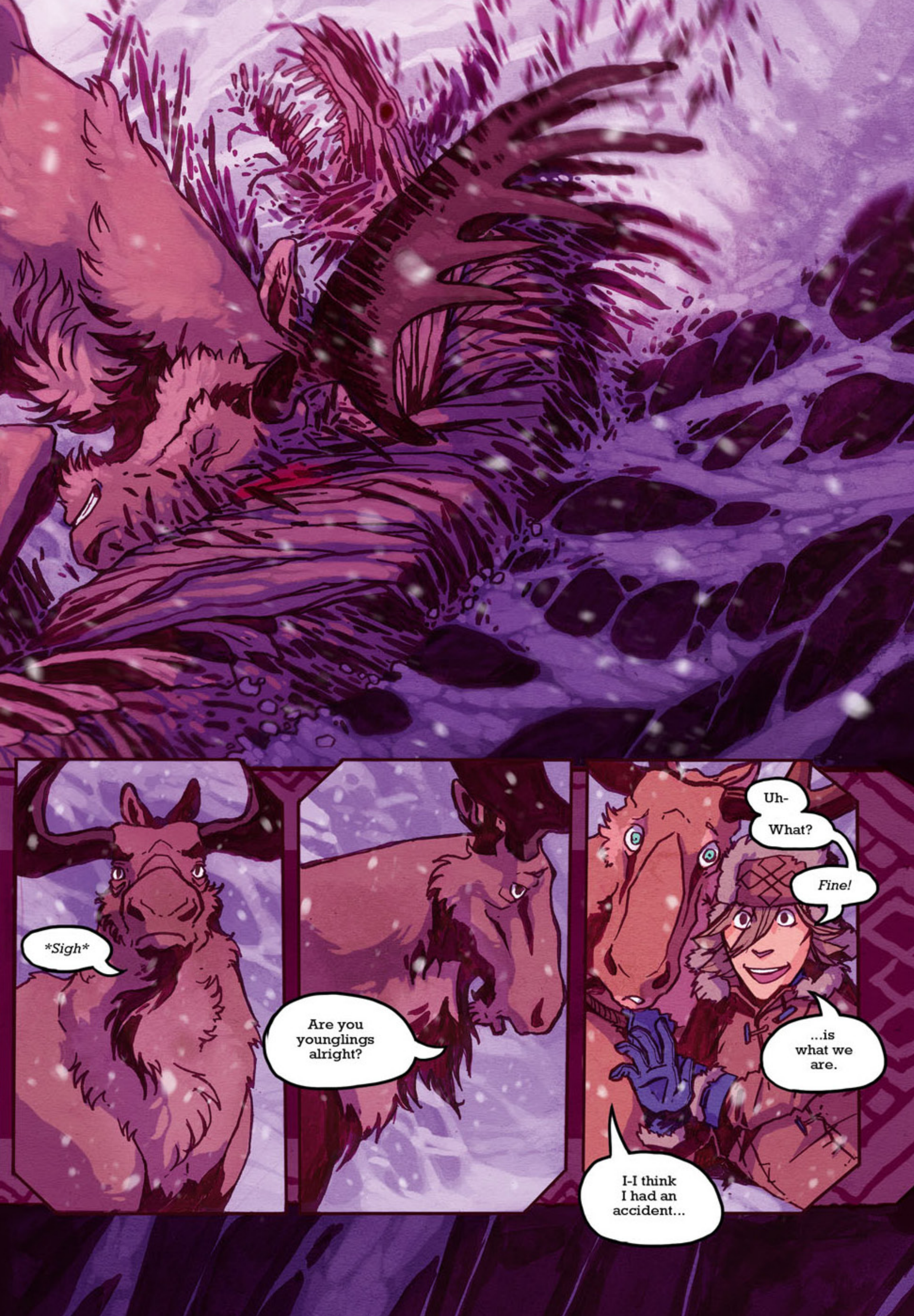

Come on Ville! We have to find the road again!
Turn around!
I don't want to turn around!
But...you *have to!*
If I change my running direction it might catch up to us and eat me!
I'll just take a small detour, we won't get lost! I have a great sense of direction.
Fine...
...but try getting up on higher ground soon.

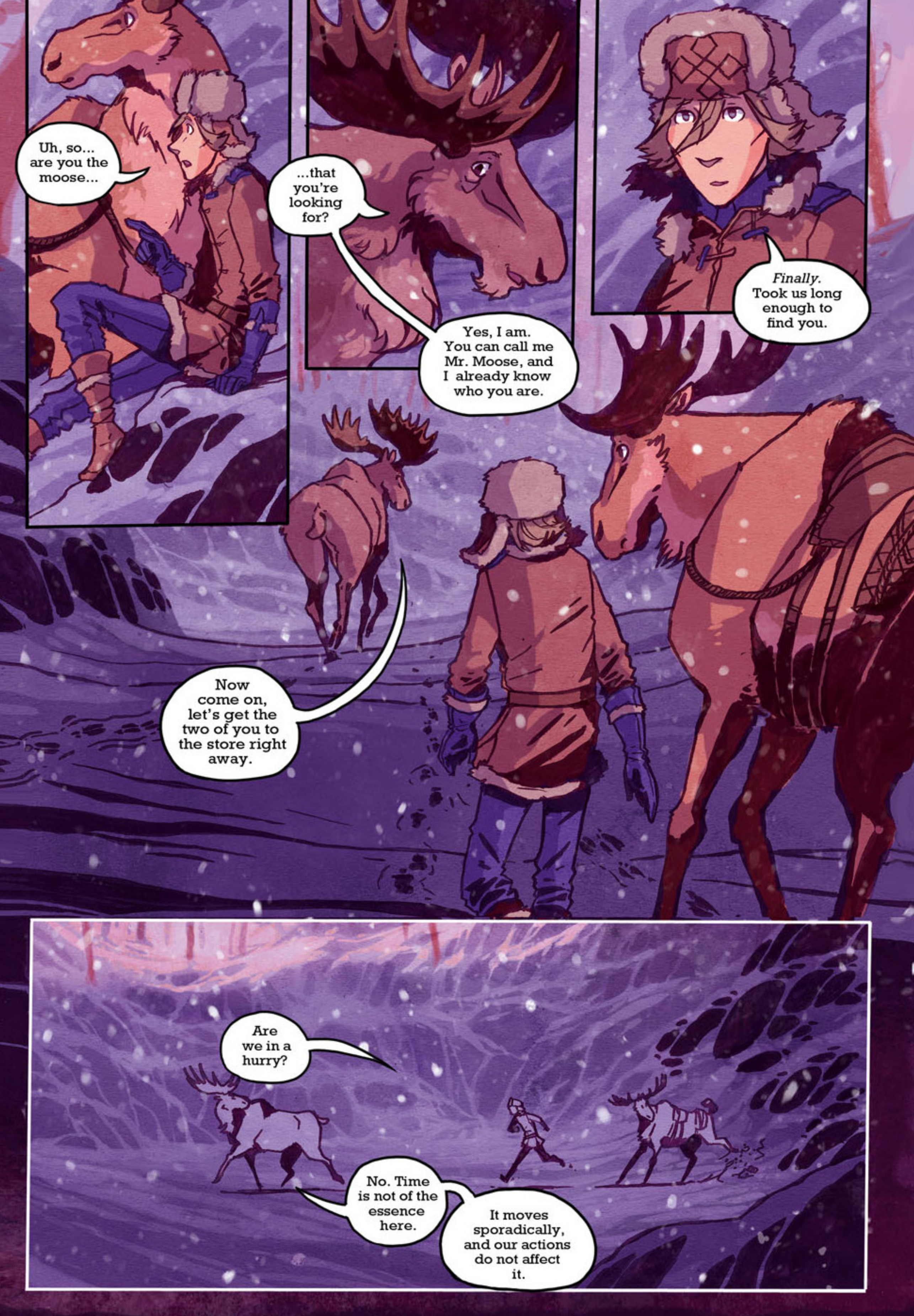

Before, you know, something like this happens.
Oh...
...no.
Do you still think we're lucky?

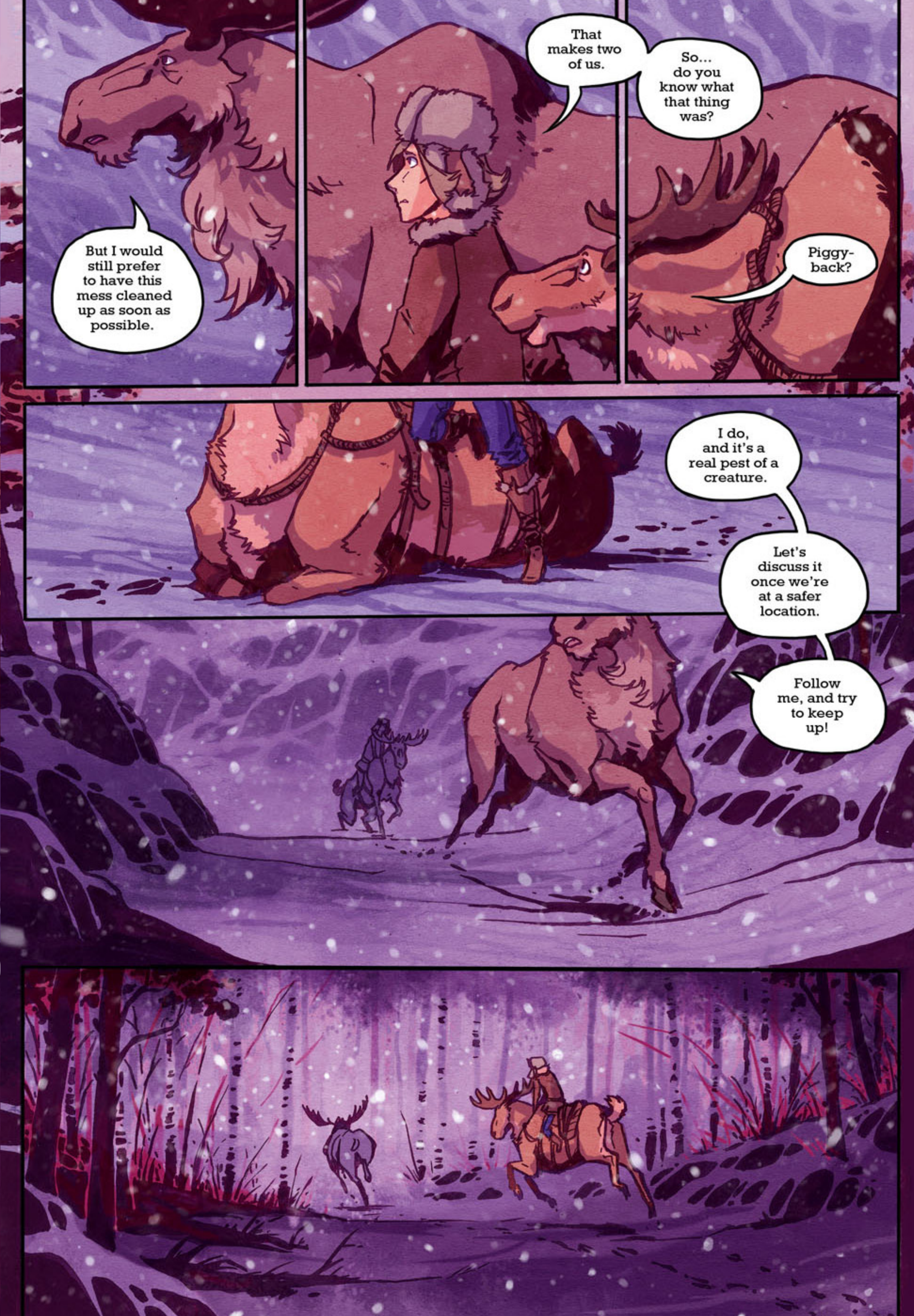

O-okay, maybe we should turn back after all.
It's too late now, we'll just run straight into the thing in the pass. There's no way to avoid it.
Those cliffs look really easy to climb.
What? You want to climb up there?
Yes!
Come on!
I can't get a grip on anything! Help me!
Don't try pulling yourself up, push with your hind legs instead!
Hnnngh!
Gack!
I can't do it!

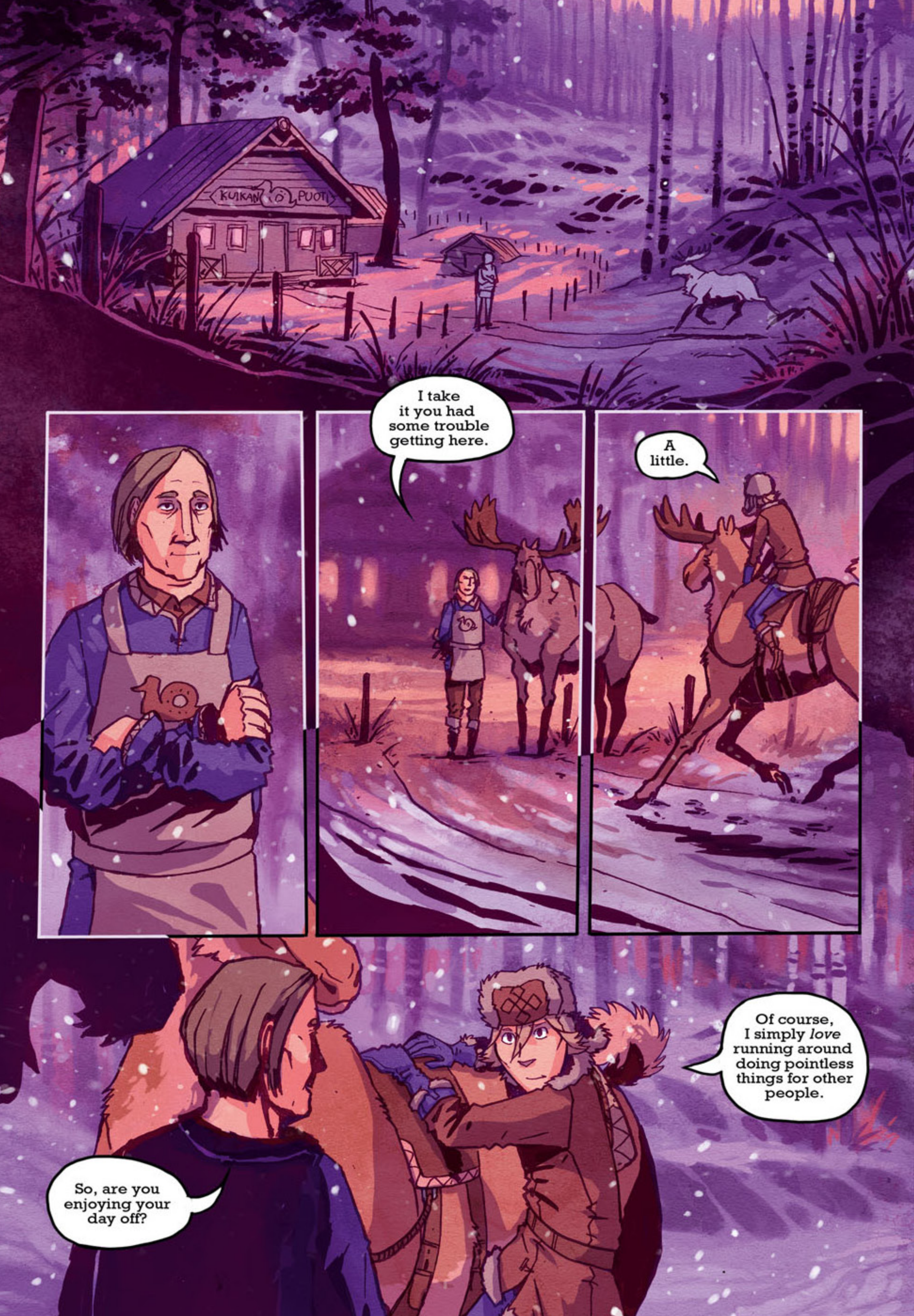

Sniff I'm so sorry I'm just a stupid, big moose, and not a monkey.
...Ow.
Then I could climb up anywhere and we could go hide in a tree or something.

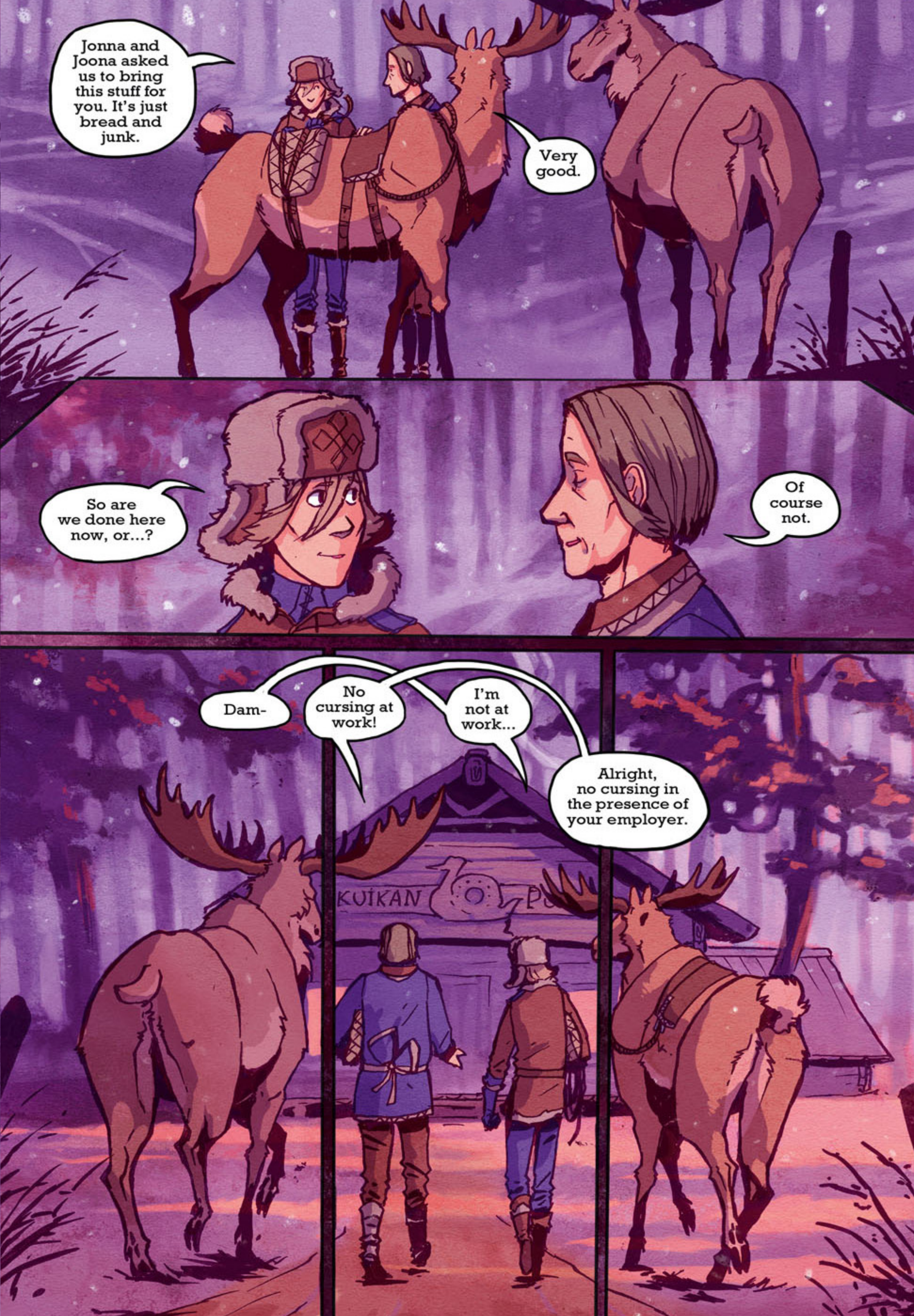

And *stay* away, nuisance!

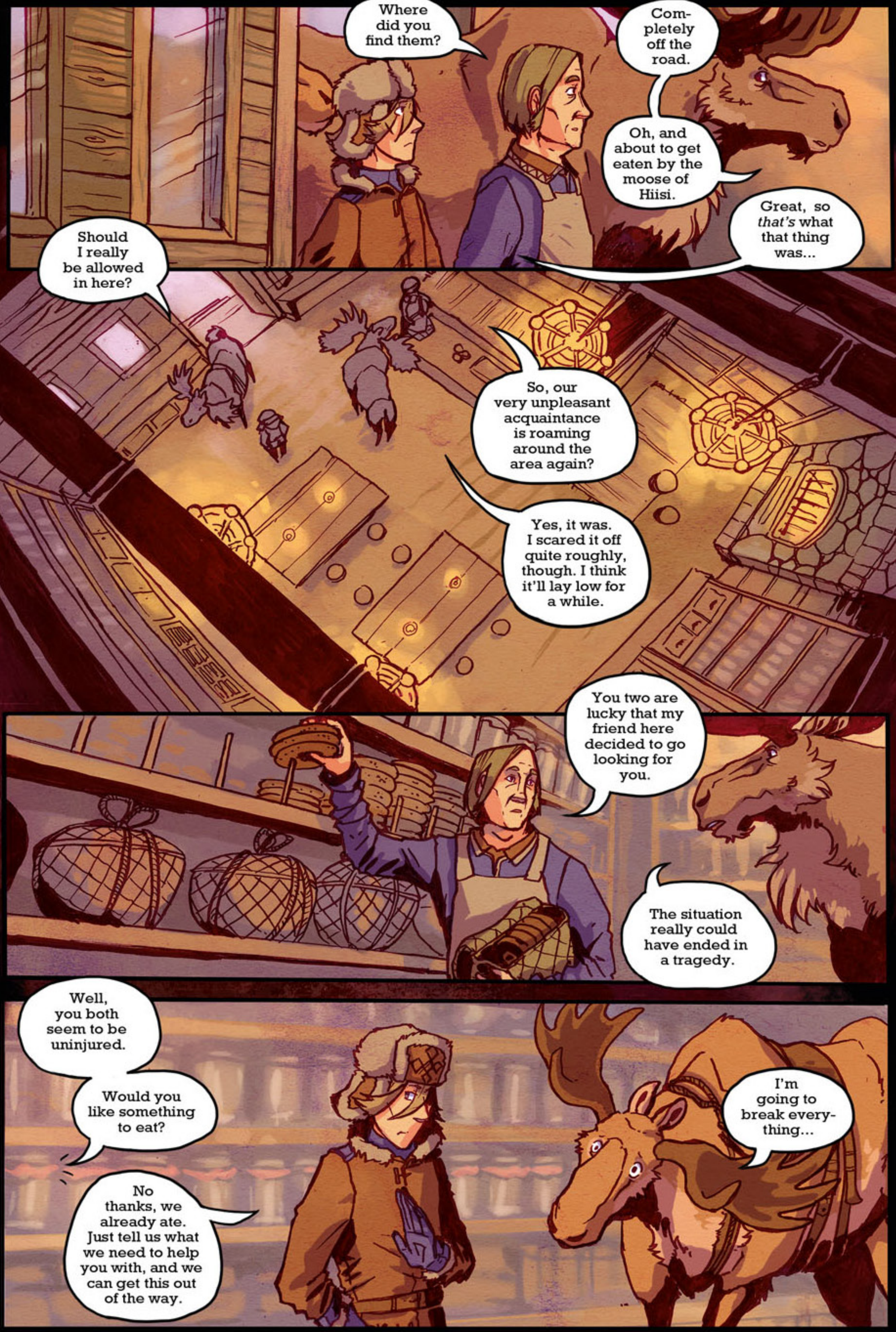

Sigh
Are you younglings alright?
Uh-
What?
Fine!
...is what we are.
I-I think I had an accident...

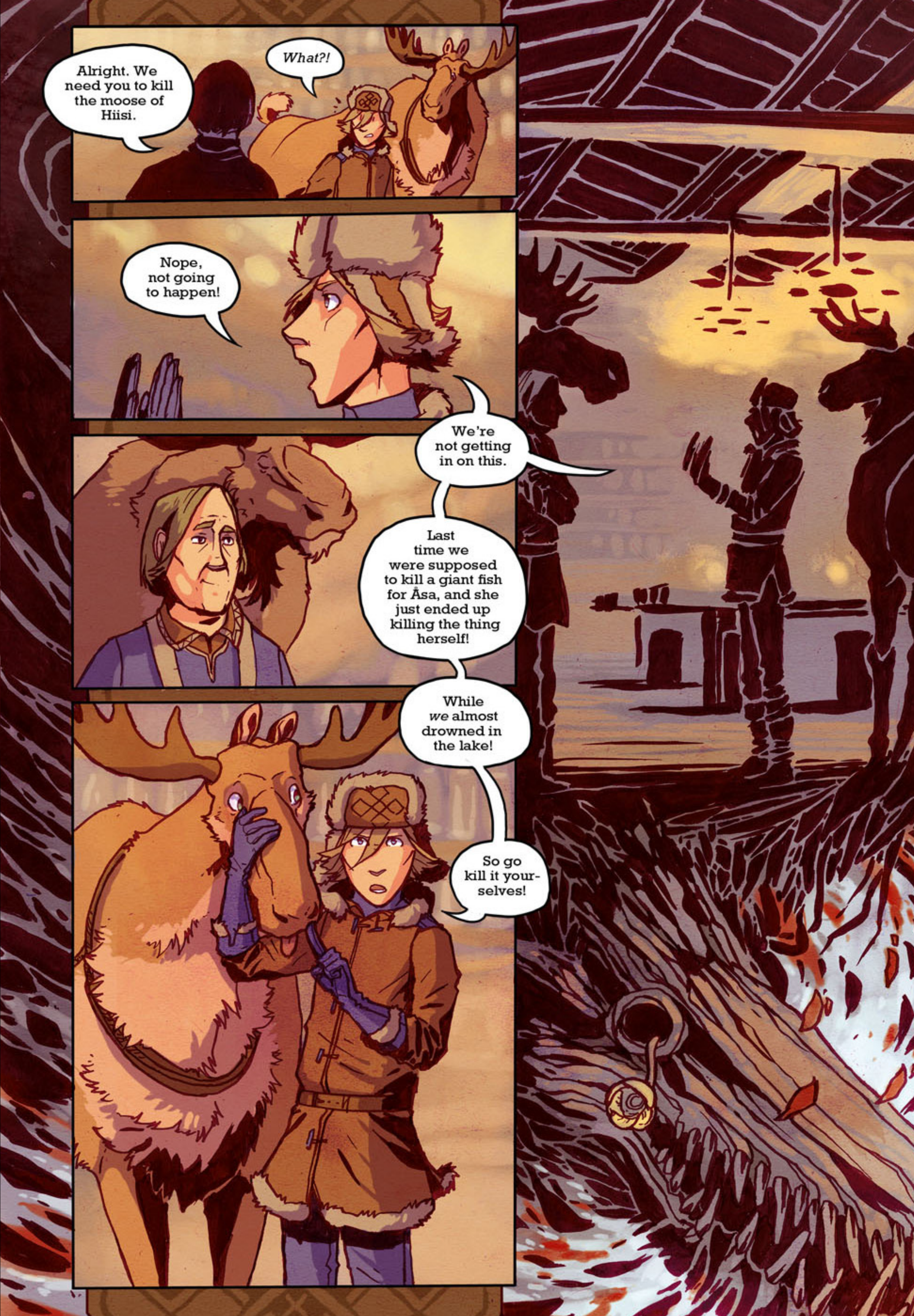

Uh, so... are you the moose...
...that you're looking for?
Finally. Took us long enough to find you.
Yes, I am. You can call me Mr. Moose, and I already know who you are.
Now come on, let's get the two of you to the store right away.
Are we in a hurry?
No. Time is not of the essence here.
It moves sporadically, and our actions do not affect it.

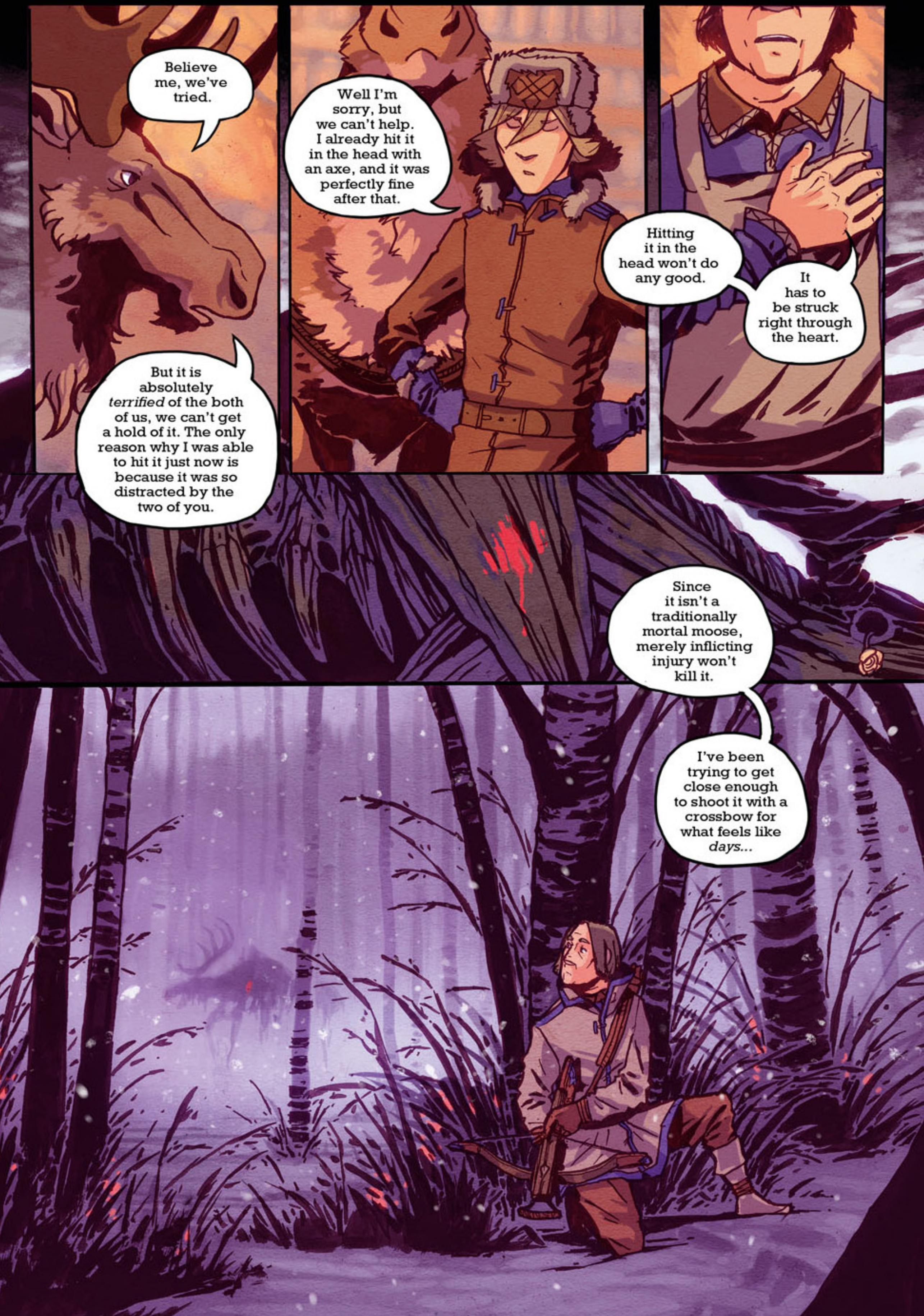

But I would still prefer to have this mess cleaned up as soon as possible.
That makes two of us.
So... do you know what that thing was?
Piggy-back?
I do, and it's a real pest of a creature.
Let's discuss it once we're at a safer location.
Follow me, and try to keep up!

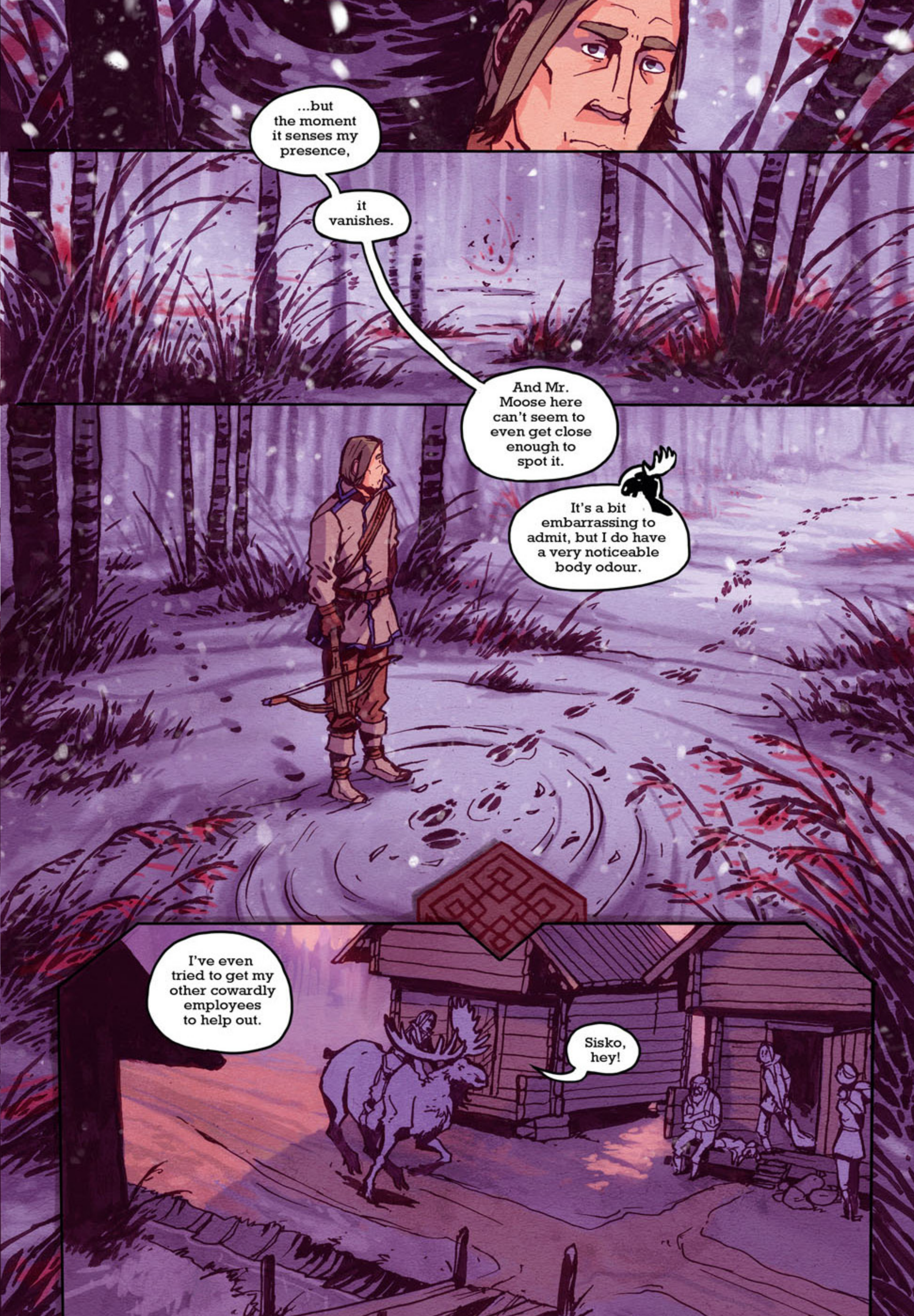

KUIKAN PUOTI
I take it you had some trouble getting here.
A little.
Of course, I simply *love* running around doing pointless things for other people.
So, are you enjoying your day off?

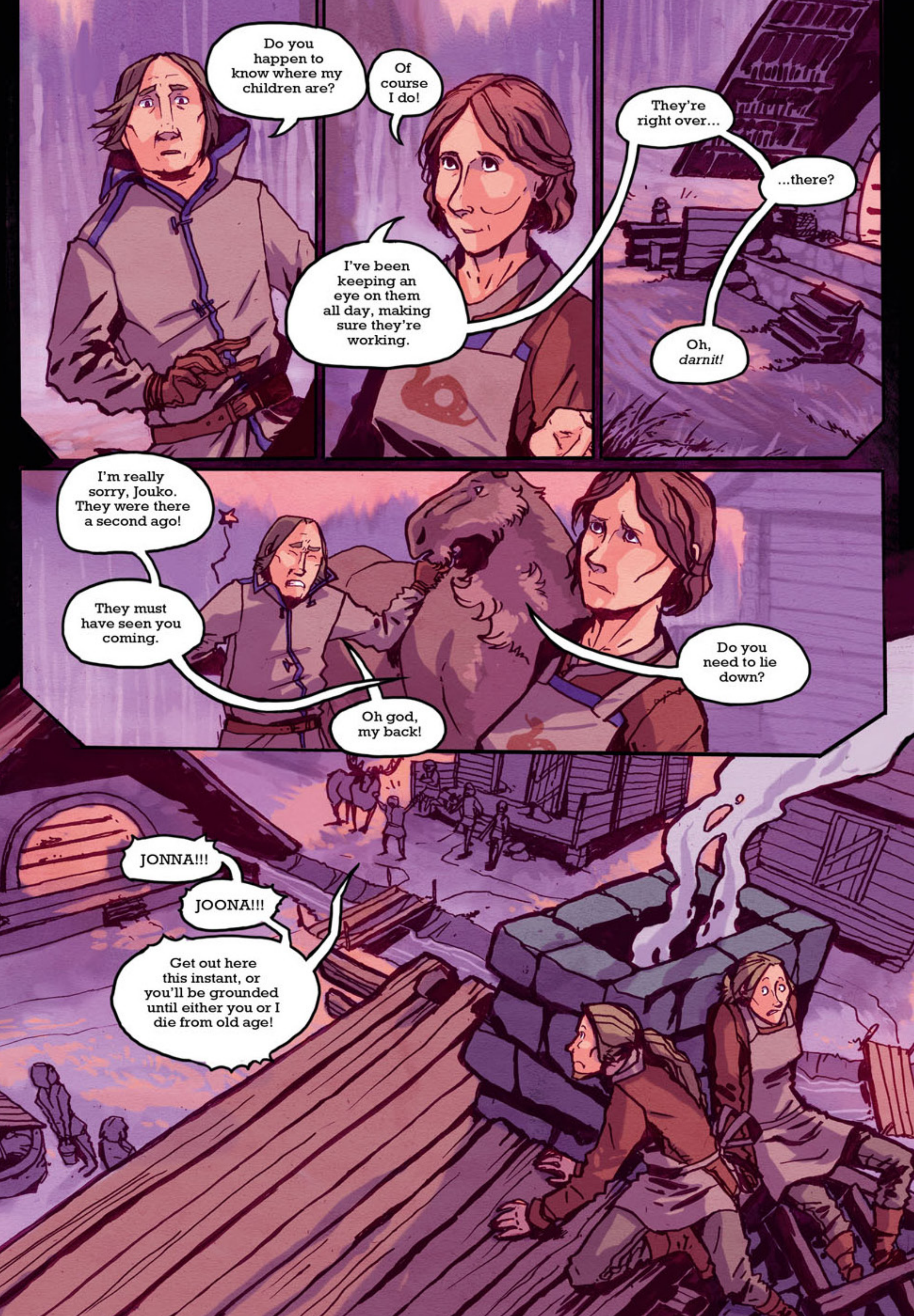

Jonna and Joona asked us to bring this stuff for you. It's just bread and junk.
Very good.
So are we done here now, or...?
Of course not.
Dam-
No cursing at work!
I'm not at work...
Alright, no cursing in the presence of your employer.
KUIKAN

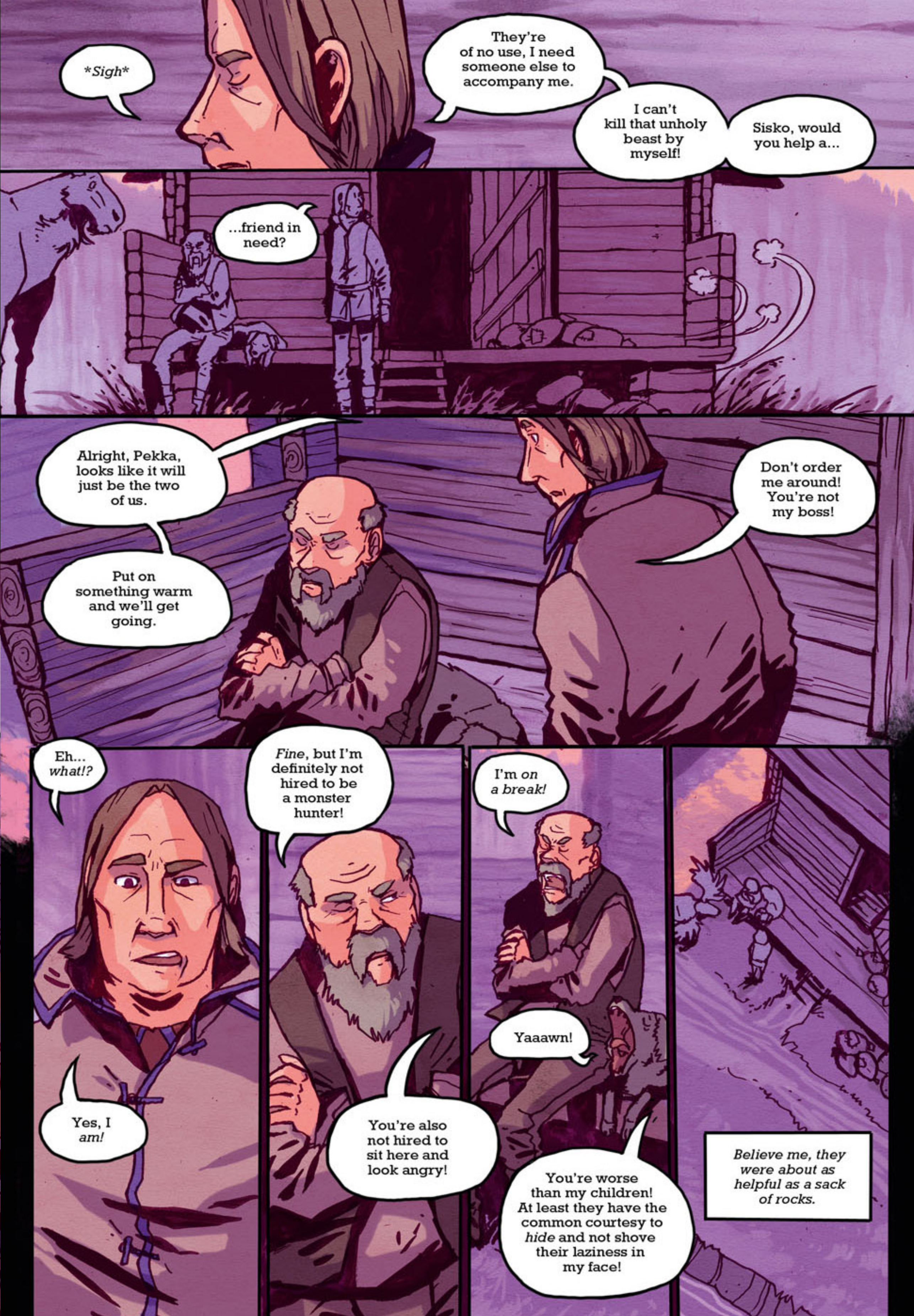

Where did you find them?
Completely off the road.
Oh, and about to get eaten by the moose of Hiisi.
Great, so *that's* what that thing was...
Should I really be allowed in here?
So, our very unpleasant acquaintance is roaming around the area again?
Yes, it was. I scared it off quite roughly, though. I think it'll lay low for a while.
You two are lucky that my friend here decided to go looking for you.
The situation really could have ended in a tragedy.
Well, you both seem to be uninjured.
Would you like something to eat?
No thanks, we already ate. Just tell us what we need to help you with, and we can get this out of the way.
I'm going to break everything...

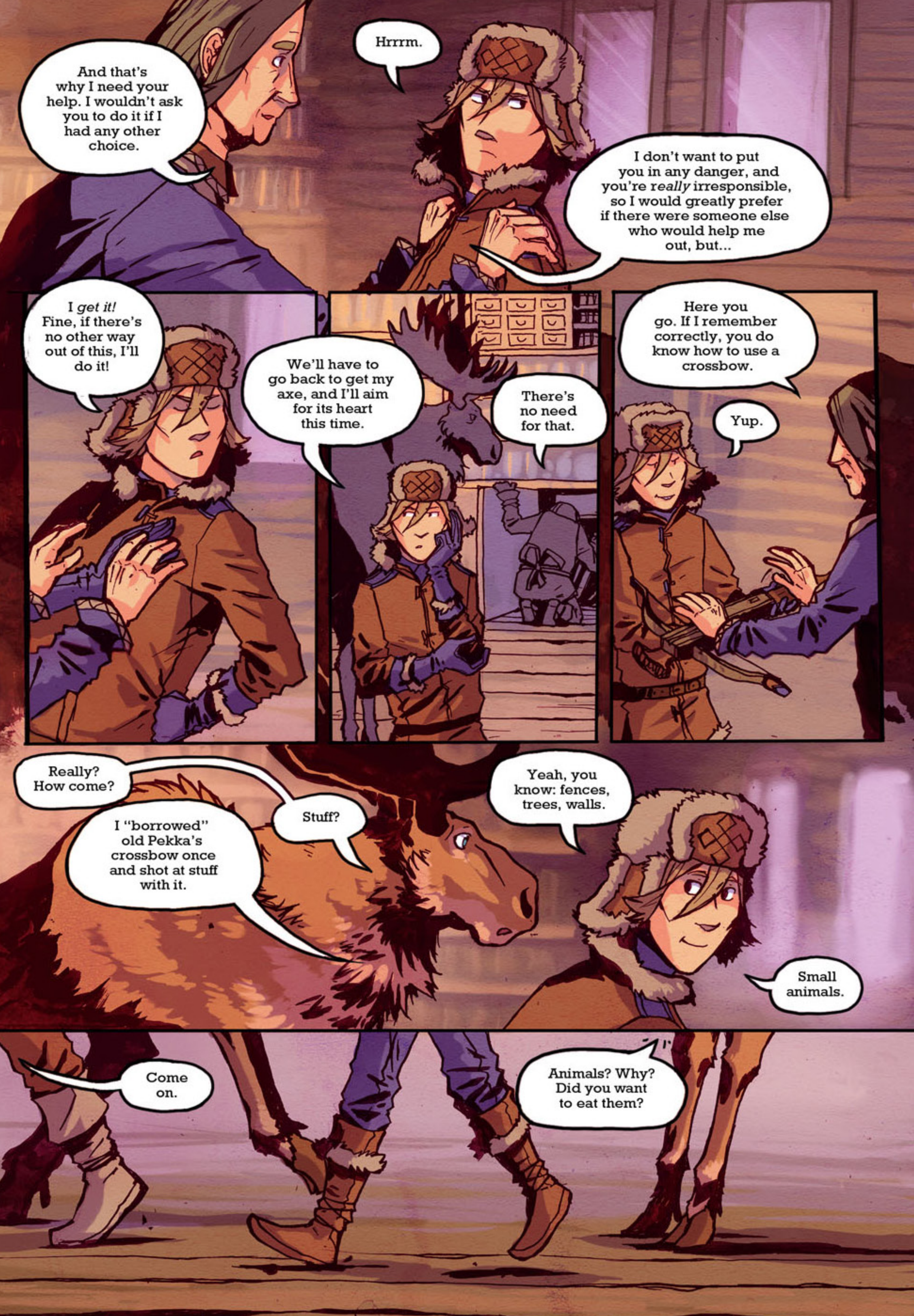

Alright. We need you to kill the moose of Hiisi.
What?!
Nope, not going to happen!
We're not getting in on this.
Last time we were supposed to kill a giant fish for Åsa, and she just ended up killing the thing herself!
While *we* almost drowned in the lake!
So go kill it yourselves!

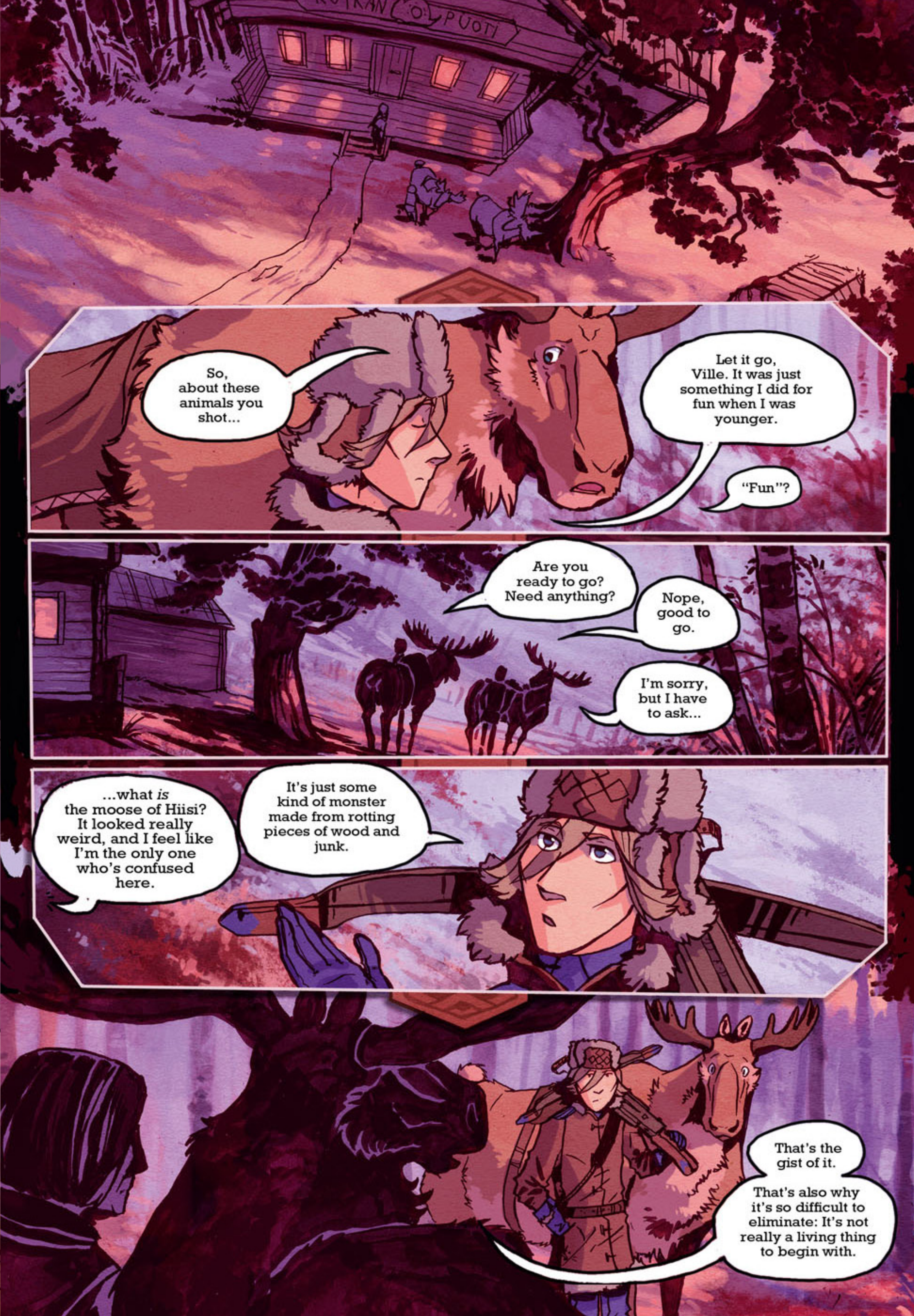

Believe me, we've tried.
But it is absolutely *terrified* of the both of us, we can't get a hold of it. The only reason why I was able to hit it just now is because it was so distracted by the two of you.
Well I'm sorry, but we can't help. I already hit it in the head with an axe, and it was perfectly fine after that.
Hitting it in the head won't do any good.
It has to be struck right through the heart.
Since it isn't a traditionally mortal moose, merely inflicting injury won't kill it.
I've been trying to get close enough to shoot it with a crossbow for what feels like *days*...

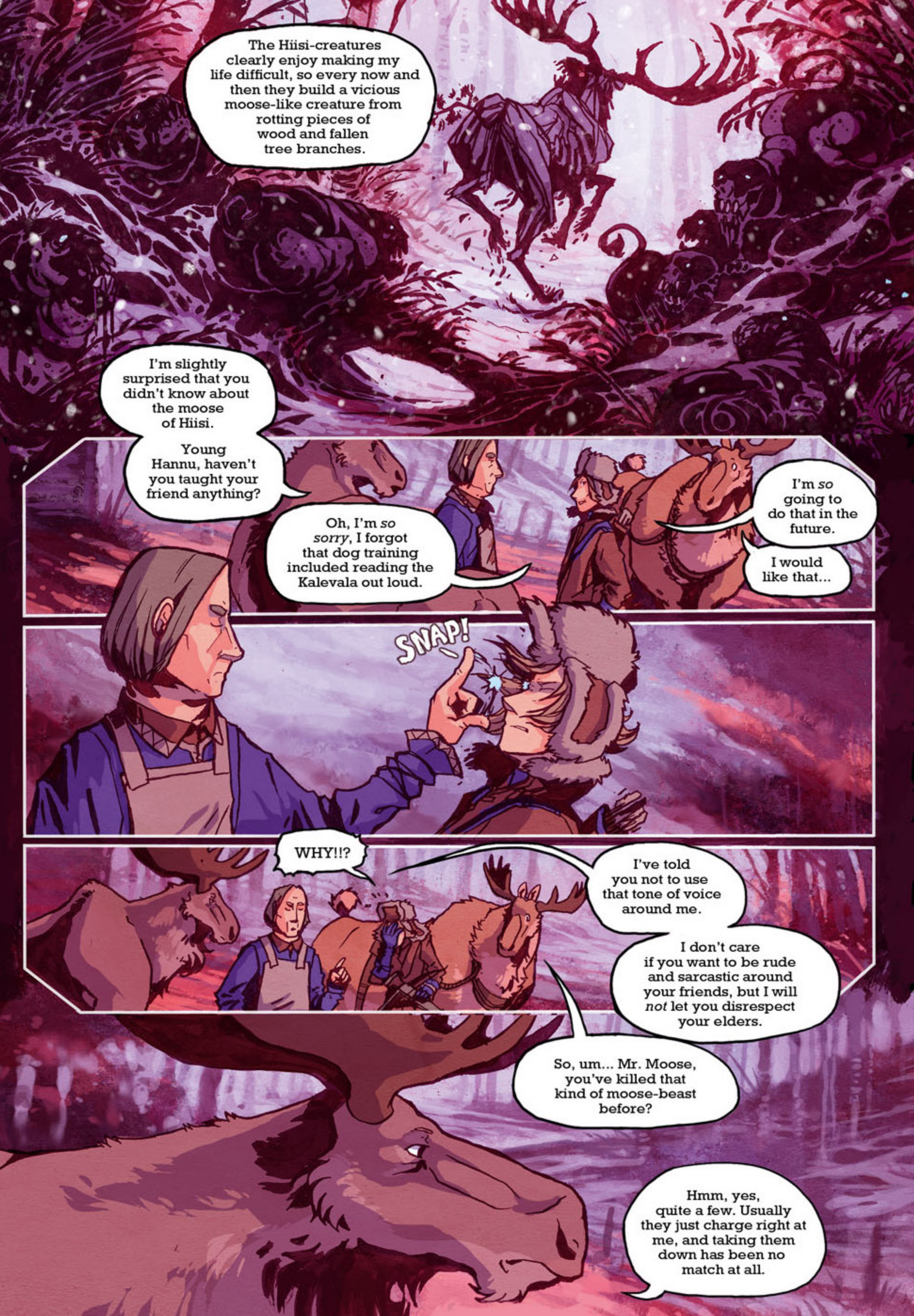

...but the moment it senses my presence,
it vanishes.
And Mr. Moose here can't seem to even get close enough to spot it.
It's a bit embarrassing to admit, but I do have a very noticeable body odour.
I've even tried to get my other cowardly employees to help out.
Sisko, hey!

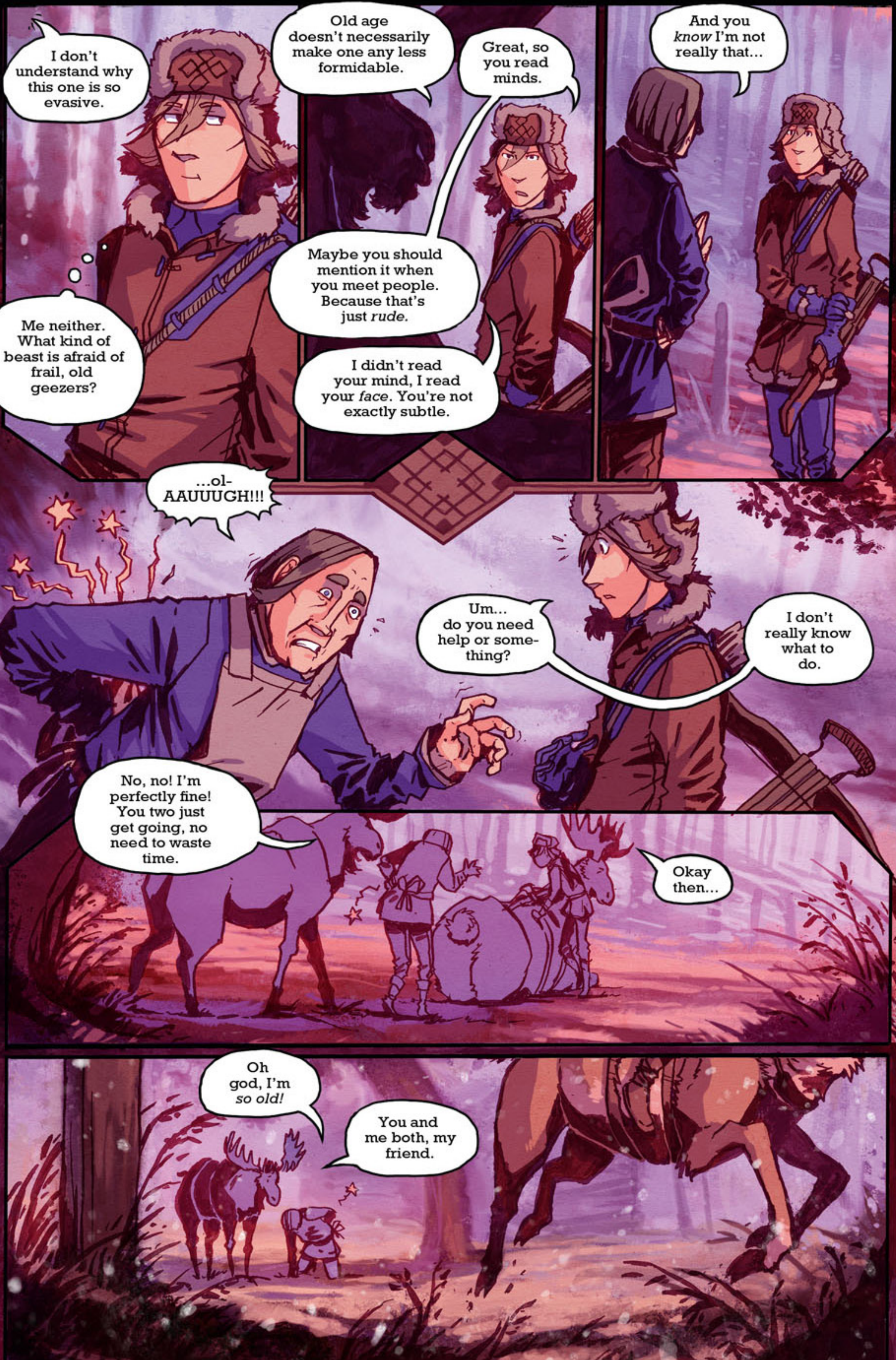

Do you happen to know where my children are?
Of course I do!
I've been keeping an eye on them all day, making sure they're working.
They're right over...
...there?
Oh, *darnit!*
I'm really sorry, Jouko. They were there a second ago!
They must have seen you coming.
Do you need to lie down?
Oh god, my back!
JONNA!!!
JOONA!!!
Get out here this instant, or you'll be grounded until either you or I die from old age!

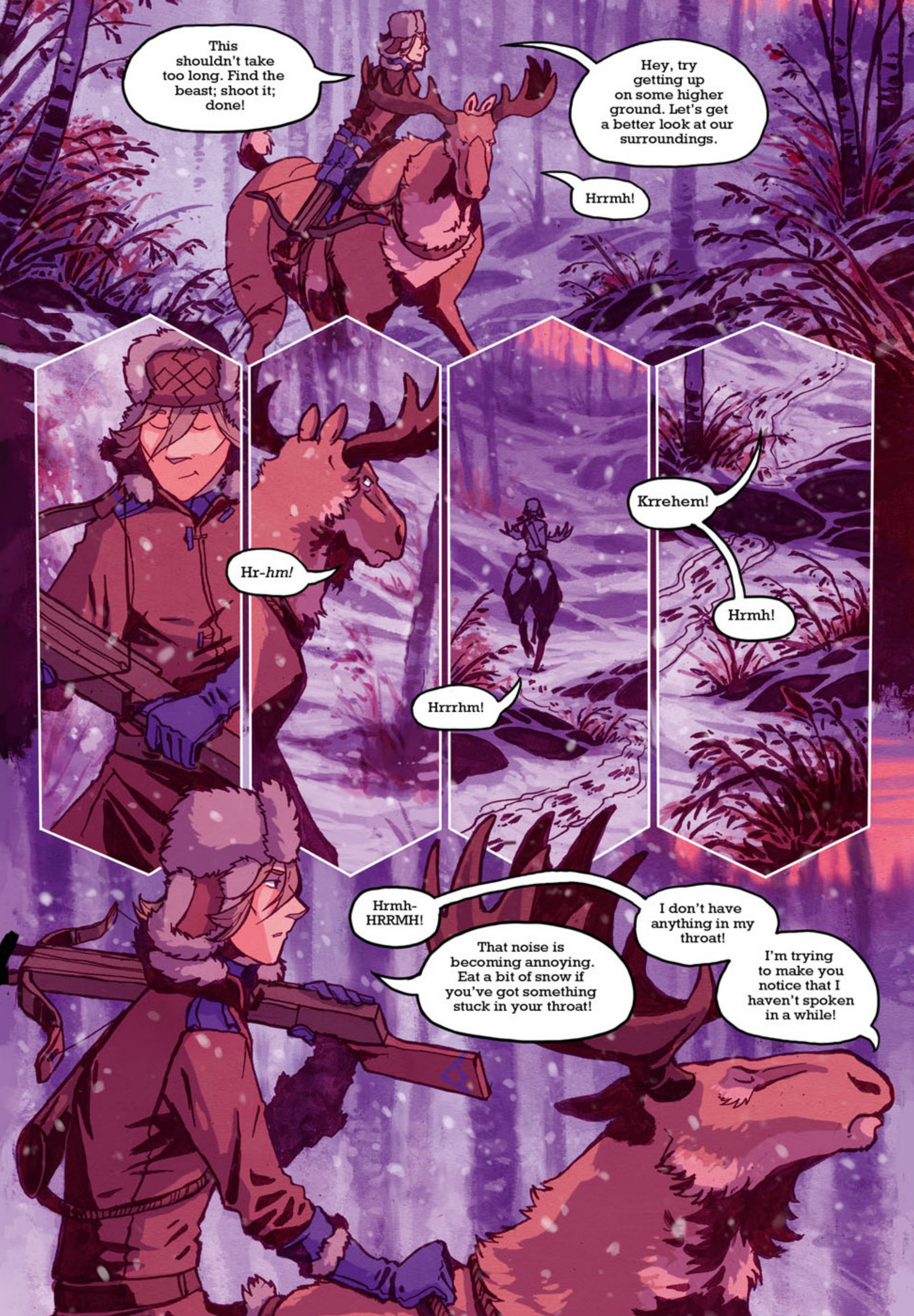

Sigh
They're of no use, I need someone else to accompany me.
I can't kill that unholy beast by myself!
Sisko, would you help a...
...friend in need?
Alright, Pekka, looks like it will just be the two of us.
Put on something warm and we'll get going.
Don't order me around! You're not my boss!
Eh... *what!?*
Yes, I *am!*
Fine, but I'm definitely not hired to be a monster hunter!
You're also not hired to sit here and look angry!
I'm *on a break!*
Yaaawn!
You're worse than my children! At least they have the common courtesy to *hide* and not shove their laziness in my face!
Believe me, they were about as helpful as a sack of rocks.

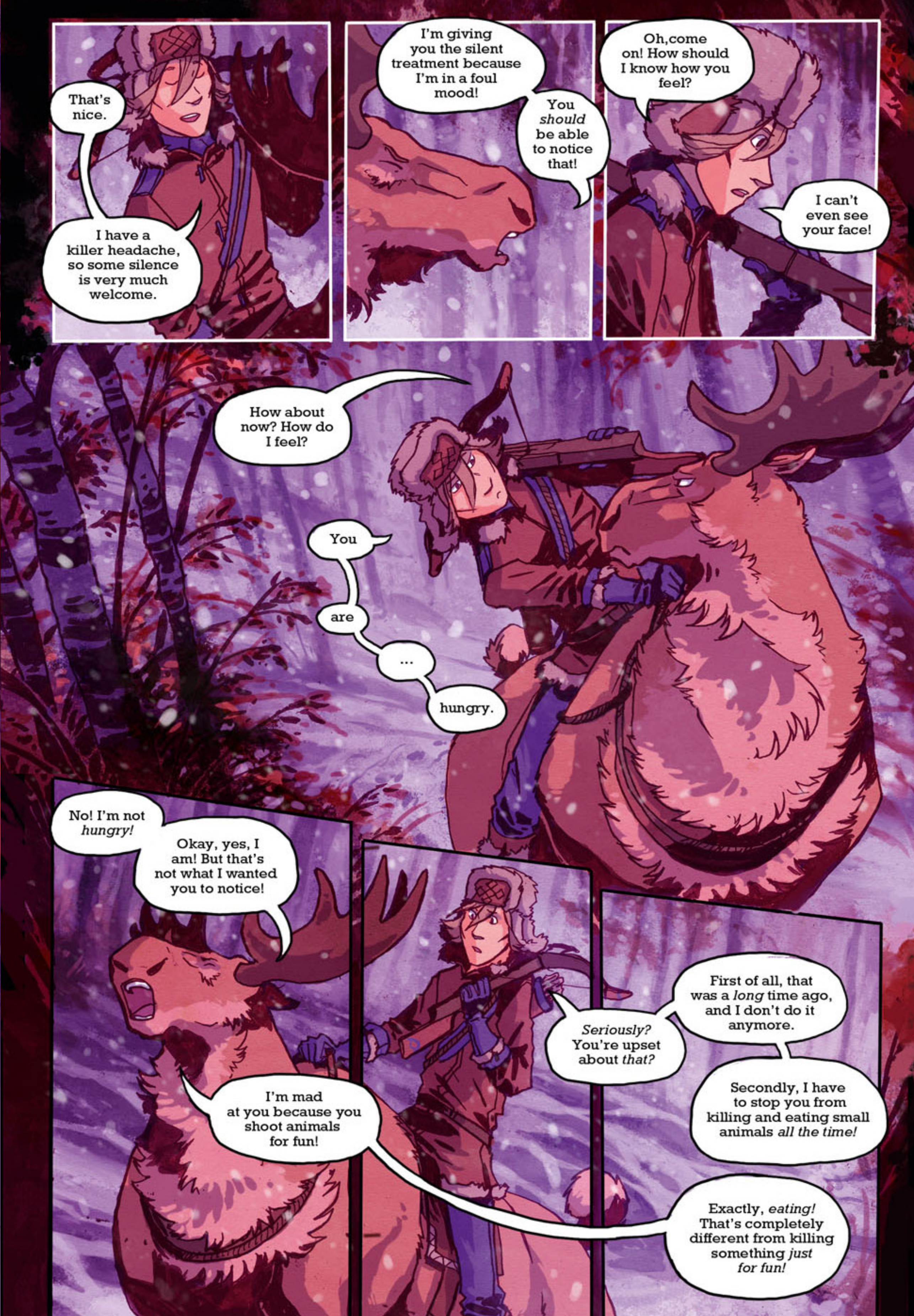

And that's why I need your help. I wouldn't ask you to do it if I had any other choice.
Hrrrm.
I don't want to put you in any danger, and you're *really* irresponsible, so I would greatly prefer if there were someone else who would help me out, but...
I *get it!* Fine, if there's no other way out of this, I'll do it!
We'll have to go back to get my axe, and I'll aim for its heart this time.
There's no need for that.
Here you go. If I remember correctly, you do know how to use a crossbow.
Yup.
Really? How come?
I "borrowed" old Pekka's crossbow once and shot at stuff with it.
Stuff?
Yeah, you know: fences, trees, walls.
Small animals.
Come on.
Animals? Why? Did you want to eat them?

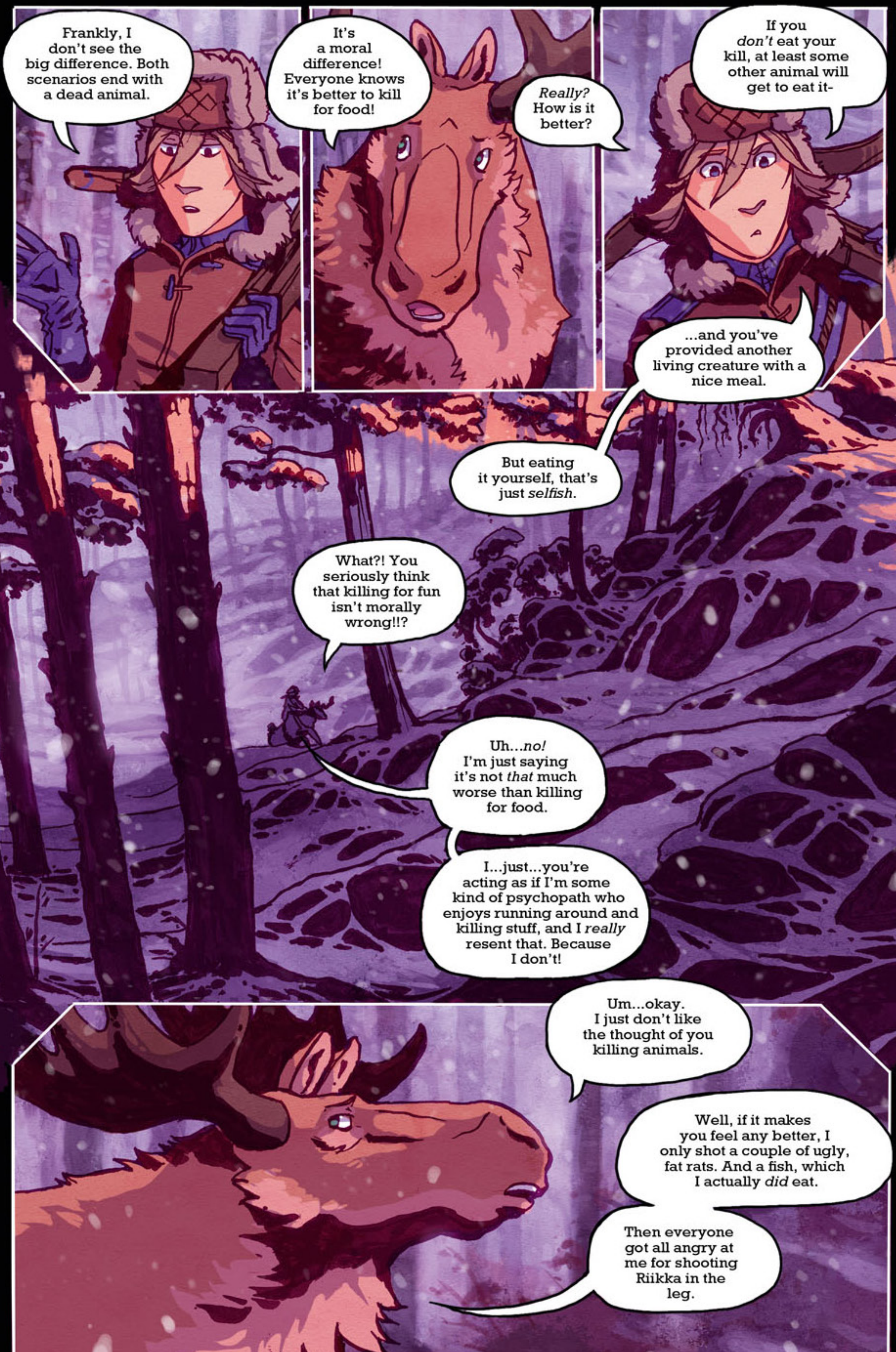

PUOTI
So, about these animals you shot...
Let it go, Ville. It was just something I did for fun when I was younger.
"Fun"?
Are you ready to go? Need anything?
Nope, good to go.
I'm sorry, but I have to ask...
...what *is* the moose of Hiisi? It looked really weird, and I feel like I'm the only one who's confused here.
It's just some kind of monster made from rotting pieces of wood and junk.
That's the gist of it.
That's also why it's so difficult to eliminate: It's not really a living thing to begin with.

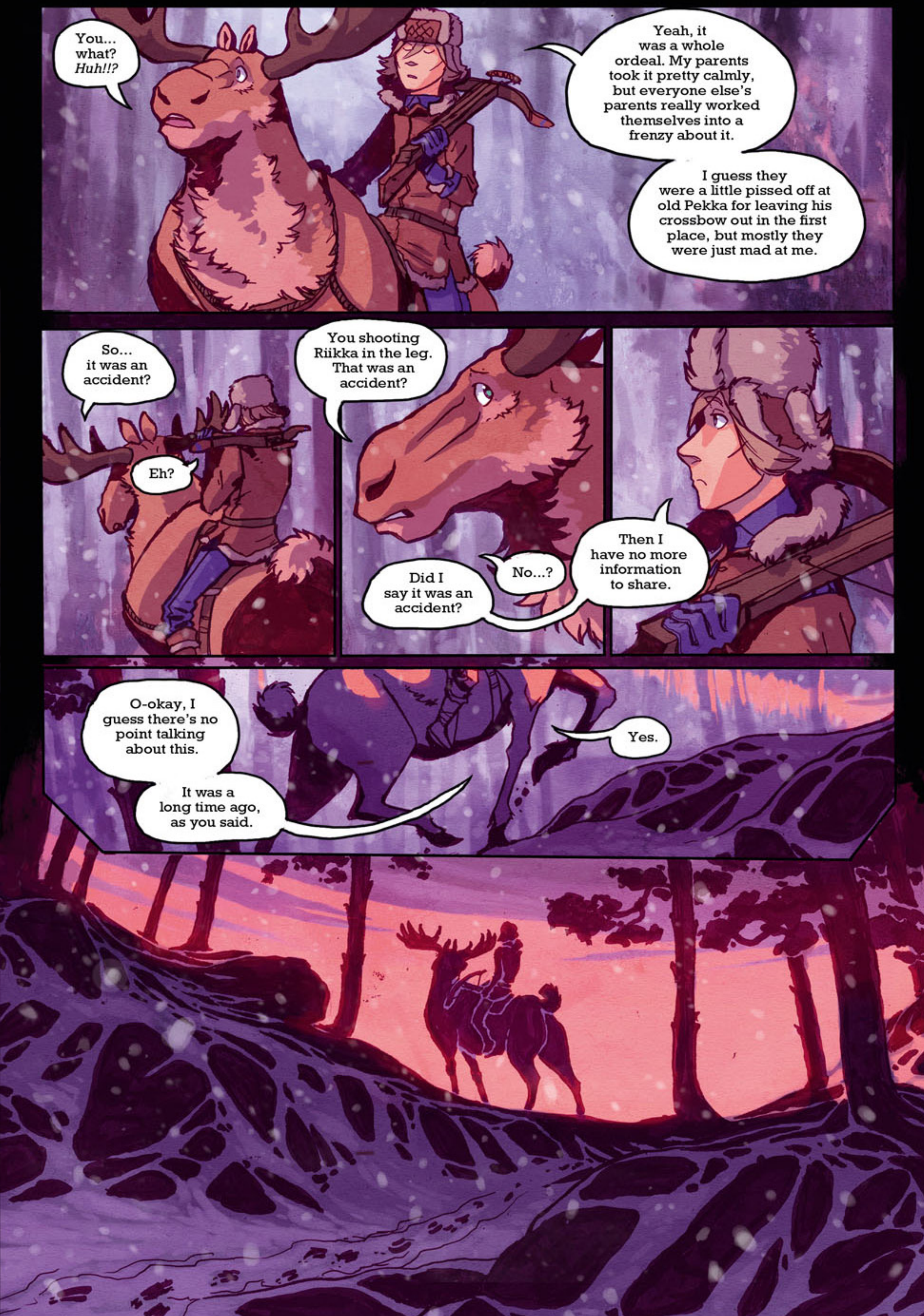

The Hiisi-creatures clearly enjoy making my life difficult, so every now and then they build a vicious moose-like creature from rotting pieces of wood and fallen tree branches.
I'm slightly surprised that you didn't know about the moose of Hiisi.
Young Hannu, haven't you taught your friend anything?
Oh, I'm *so sorry*, I forgot that dog training included reading the Kalevala out loud.
I'm *so* going to do that in the future.
I would like that...
SNAP!
WHY!!?
I've told you not to use that tone of voice around me.
I don't care if you want to be rude and sarcastic around your friends, but I will *not* let you disrespect your elders.
So, um... Mr. Moose, you've killed that kind of moose-beast before?
Hmm, yes, quite a few. Usually they just charge right at me, and taking them down has been no match at all.

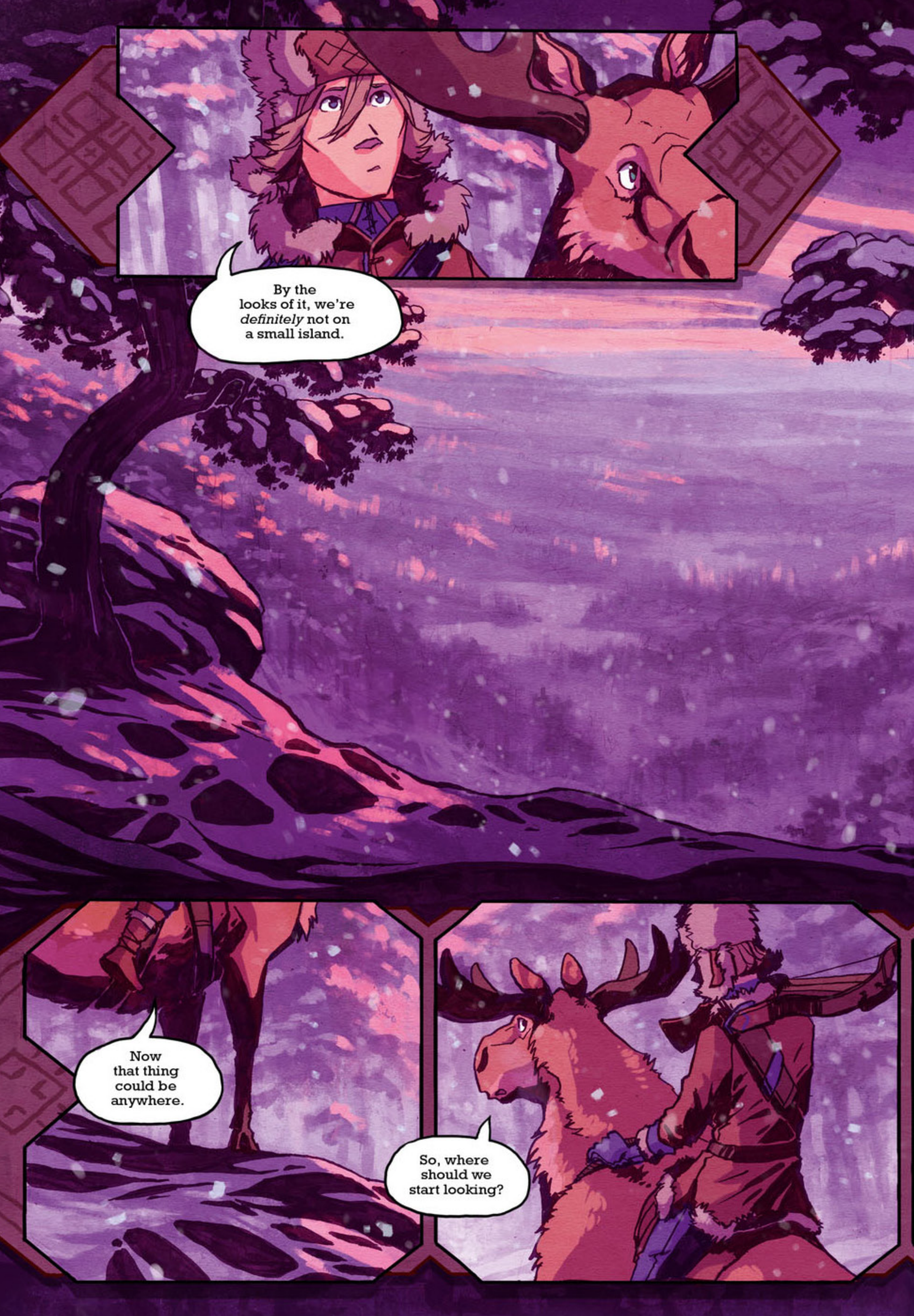

I don't understand why this one is so evasive.
Me neither. What kind of beast is afraid of frail, old geezers?
Old age doesn't necessarily make one any less formidable.
Great, so you read minds.
Maybe you should mention it when you meet people. Because that's just *rude.*
I didn't read your mind, I read your *face*. You're not exactly subtle.
And you *know* I'm not really that...
...ol- AAUUUGH!!!
Um... do you need help or some-thing?
I don't really know what to do.
No, no! I'm perfectly fine! You two just get going, no need to waste time.
Okay then...
Oh god, I'm *so old!*
You and me both, my friend.

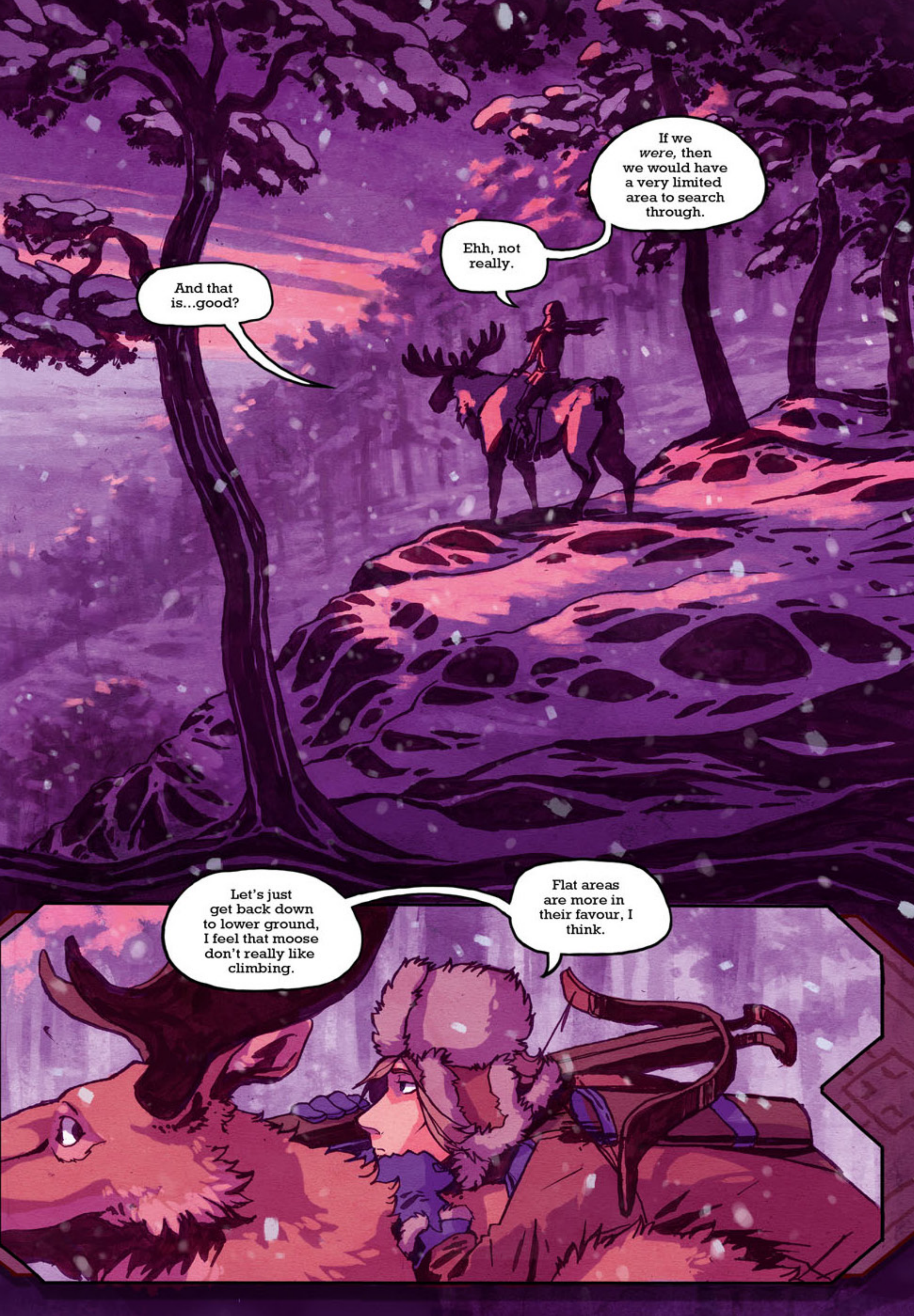

This shouldn't take too long. Find the beast; shoot it; done!
Hey, try getting up on some higher ground. Let's get a better look at our surroundings.
Hrrmh!
Hr-*hm!*
Hrrrhm!
Krrehem!
Hrmh!
Hrmh-HRRMH!
That noise is becoming annoying. Eat a bit of snow if you've got something stuck in your throat!
I don't have anything in my throat!
I'm trying to make you notice that I haven't spoken in a while!

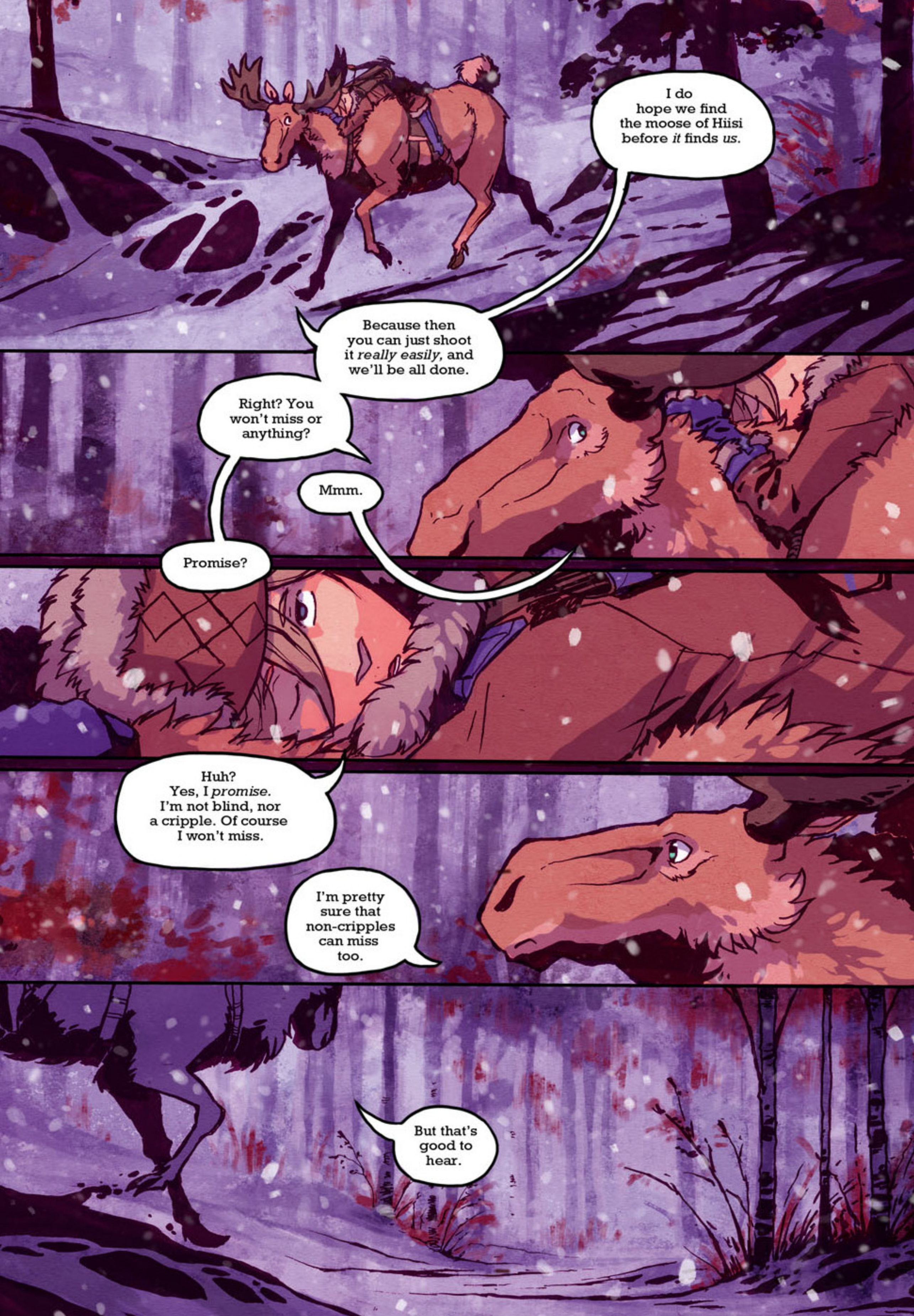

That's nice.
I have a killer headache, so some silence is very much welcome.
I'm giving you the silent treatment because I'm in a foul mood!
You *should* be able to notice that!
Oh,come on! How should I know how you feel?
I can't even see your face!
How about now? How do I feel?
You
are
...
hungry.
No! I'm not *hungry!*
Okay, yes, I am! But that's not what I wanted you to notice!
I'm mad at you because you shoot animals for fun!
Seriously? You're upset about *that?*
First of all, that was a *long* time ago, and I don't do it anymore.
Secondly, I have to stop you from killing and eating small animals *all the time!*
Exactly, *eating!* That's completely different from killing something *just for fun!*

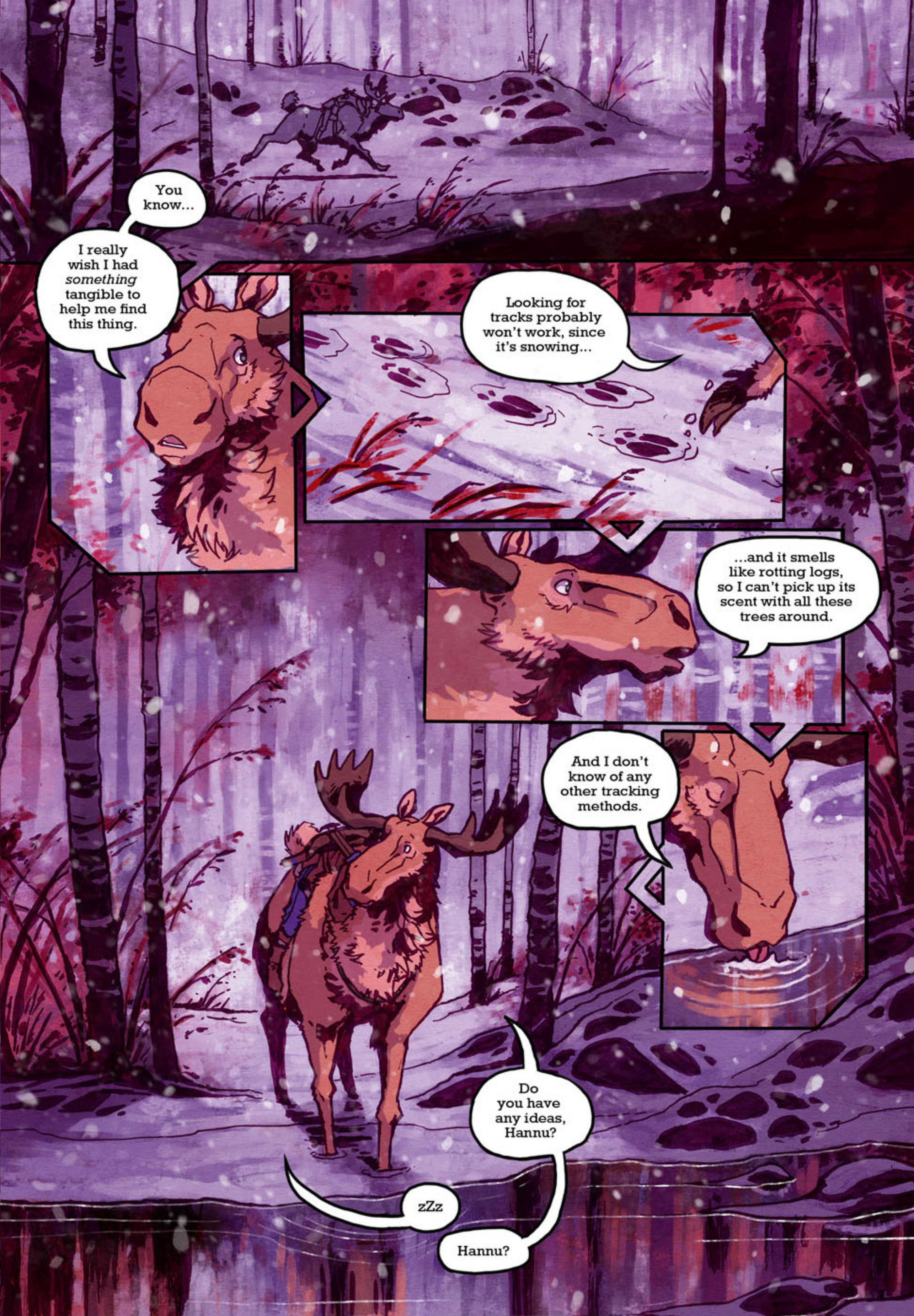

Frankly, I don't see the big difference. Both scenarios end with a dead animal.
It's a moral difference! Everyone knows it's better to kill for food!
Really? How is it better?
If you *don't* eat your kill, at least some other animal will get to eat it-
...and you've provided another living creature with a nice meal.
But eating it yourself, that's just *selfish*.
What?! You seriously think that killing for fun isn't morally wrong!!?
Uh...*no!* I'm just saying it's not *that* much worse than killing for food.
I...just...you're acting as if I'm some kind of psychopath who enjoys running around and killing stuff, and I *really* resent that. Because I don't!
Um...okay. I just don't like the thought of you killing animals.
Well, if it makes you feel any better, I only shot a couple of ugly, fat rats. And a fish, which I actually *did* eat.
Then everyone got all angry at me for shooting Riikka in the leg.

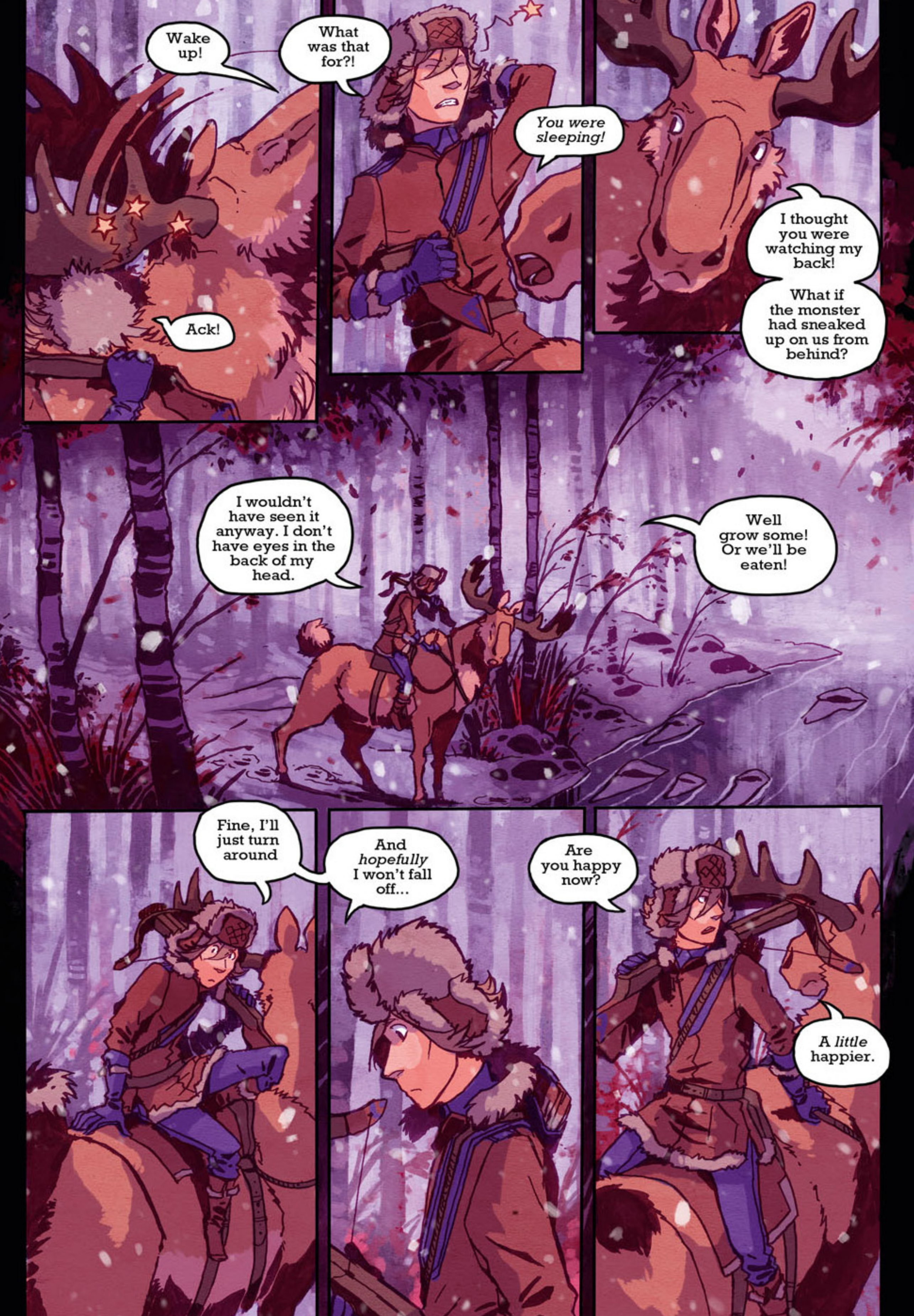

You... what? *Huh!!?*
Yeah, it was a whole ordeal. My parents took it pretty calmly, but everyone else's parents really worked themselves into a frenzy about it.
I guess they were a little pissed off at old Pekka for leaving his crossbow out in the first place, but mostly they were just mad at me.
So... it was an accident?
Eh?
You shooting Riikka in the leg. That was an accident?
Did I say it was an accident?
No...?
Then I have no more information to share.
O-okay, I guess there's no point talking about this.
It was a long time ago, as you said.
Yes.

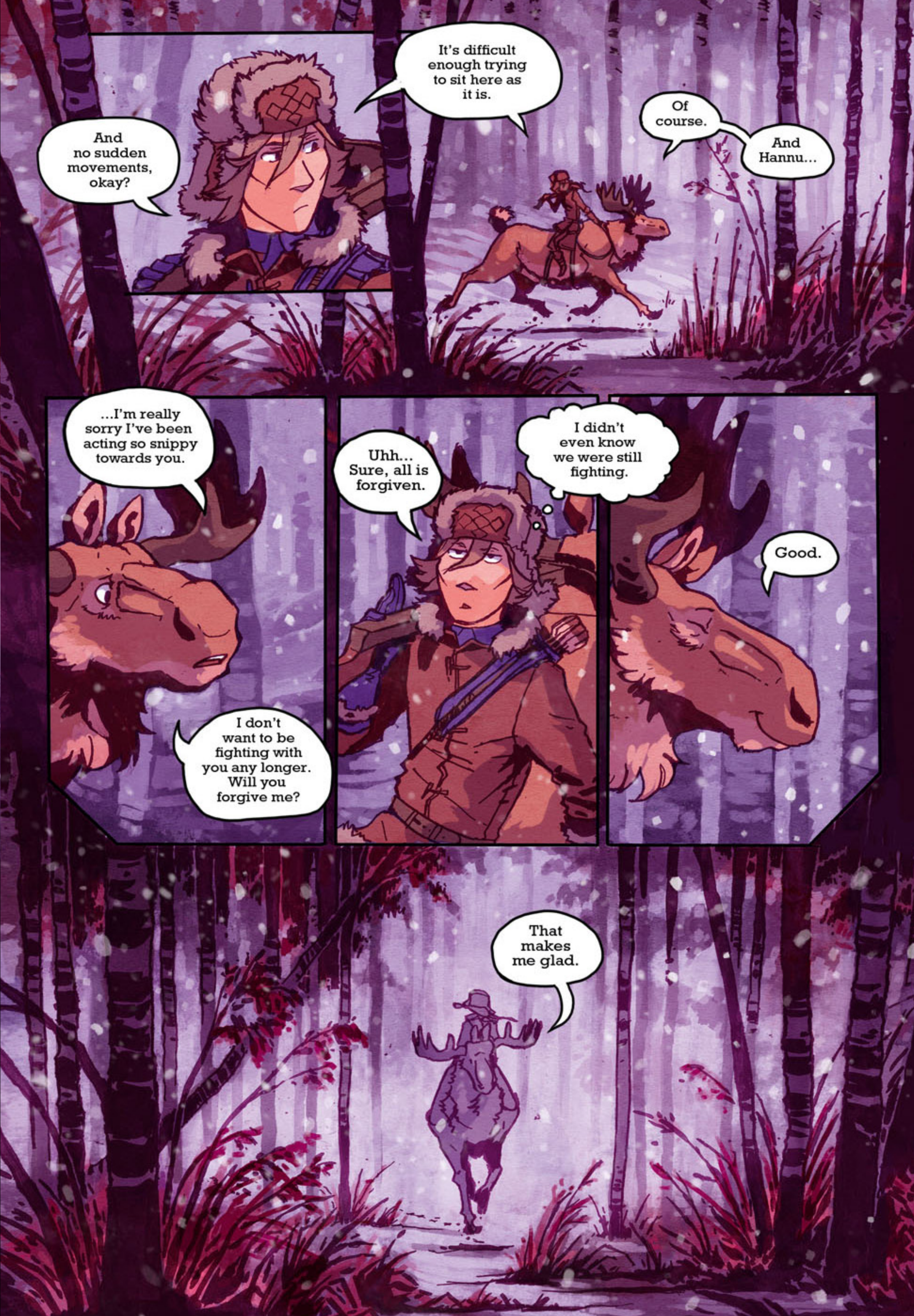

By the looks of it, we're *definitely* not on a small island.
Now that thing could be anywhere.
So, where should we start looking?

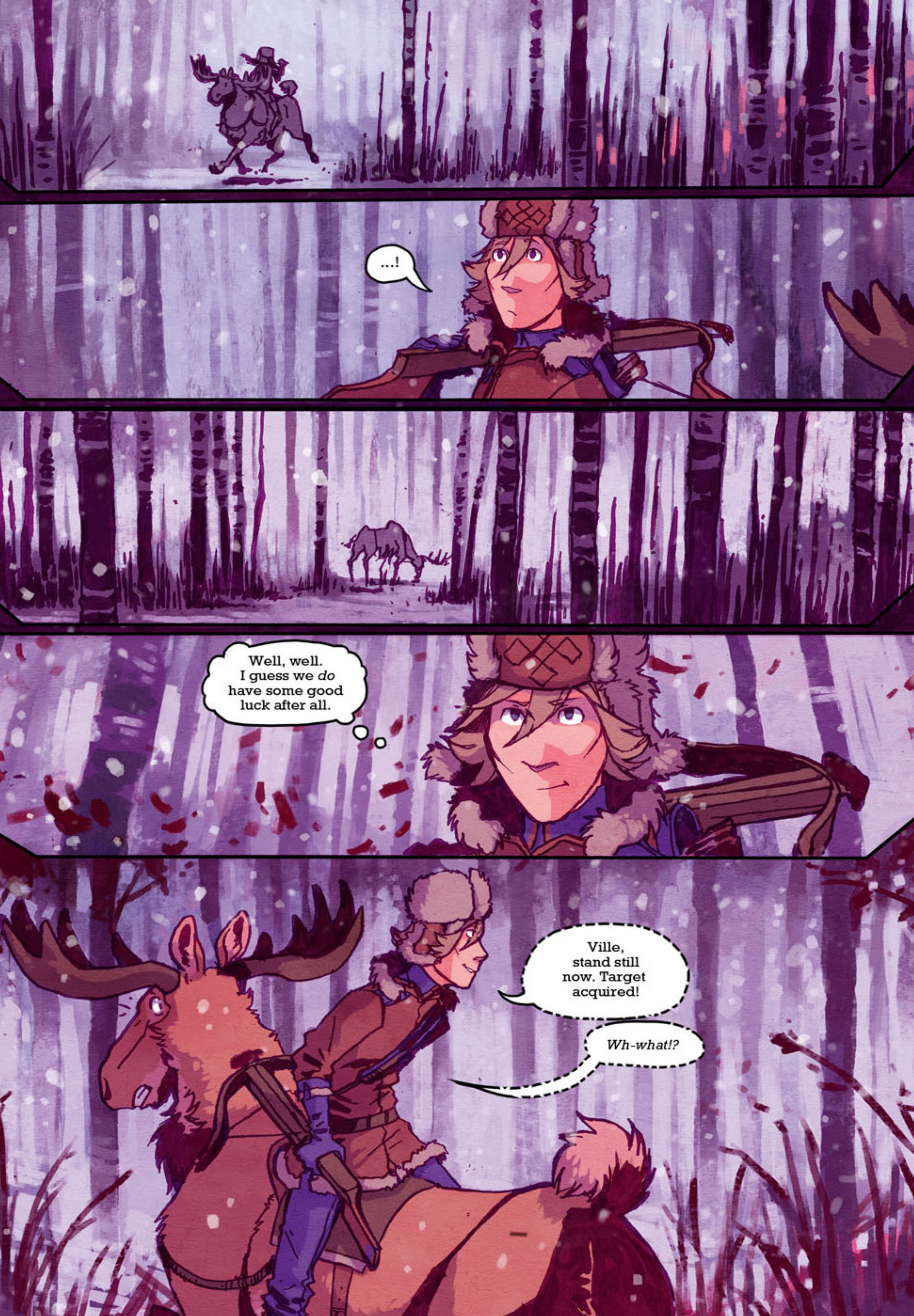

And that is...good?
Ehh, not really.
If we *were,* then we would have a very limited area to search through.
Let's just get back down to lower ground, I feel that moose don't really like climbing.
Flat areas are more in their favour, I think.

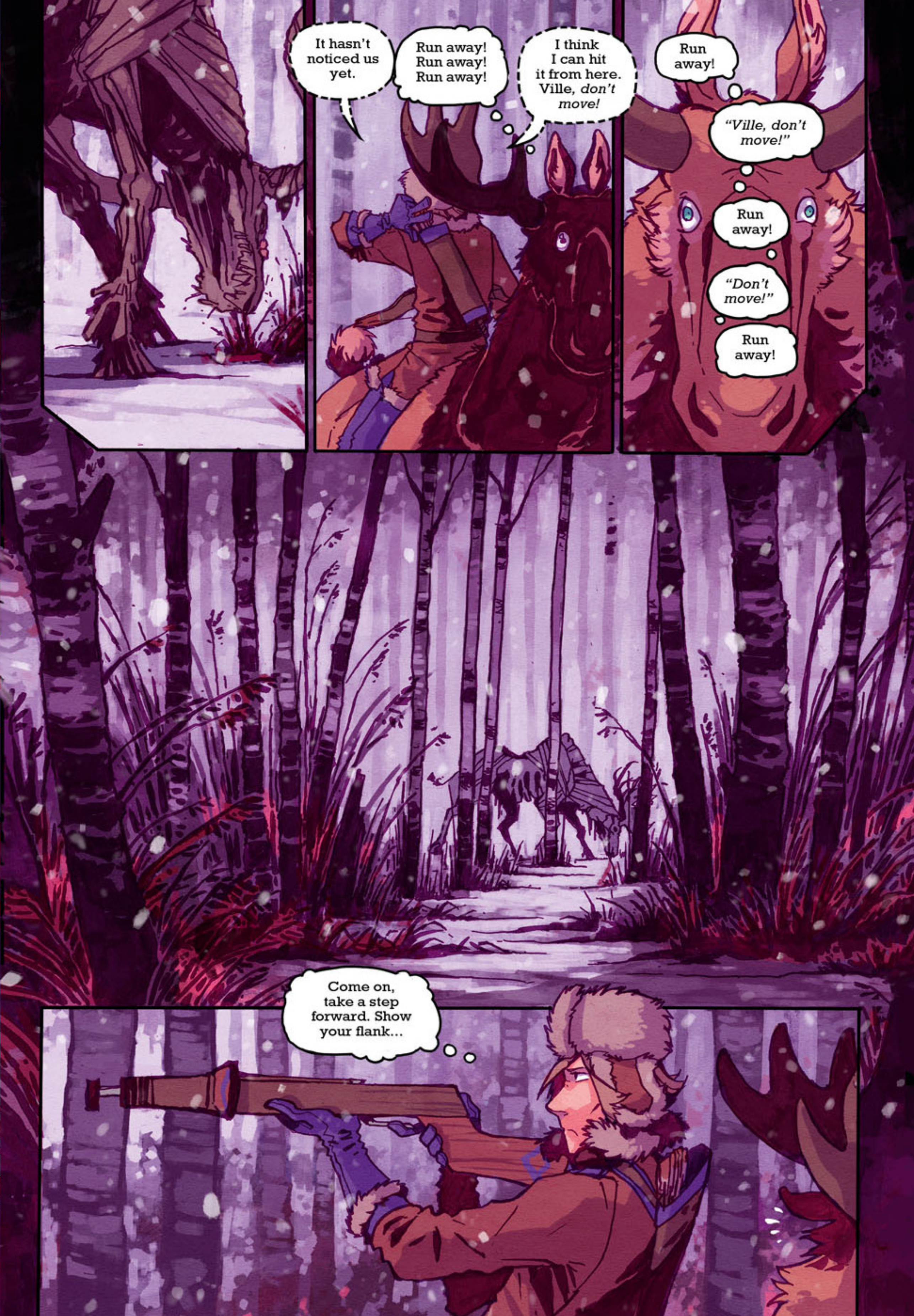

I do hope we find the moose of Hiisi before *it* finds *us*.
Because then you can just shoot it *really easily,* and we'll be all done.
Right? You won't miss or anything?
Mmm.
Promise?
Huh? Yes, I *promise.* I'm not blind, nor a cripple. Of course I won't miss.
I'm pretty sure that non-cripples can miss too.
But that's good to hear.

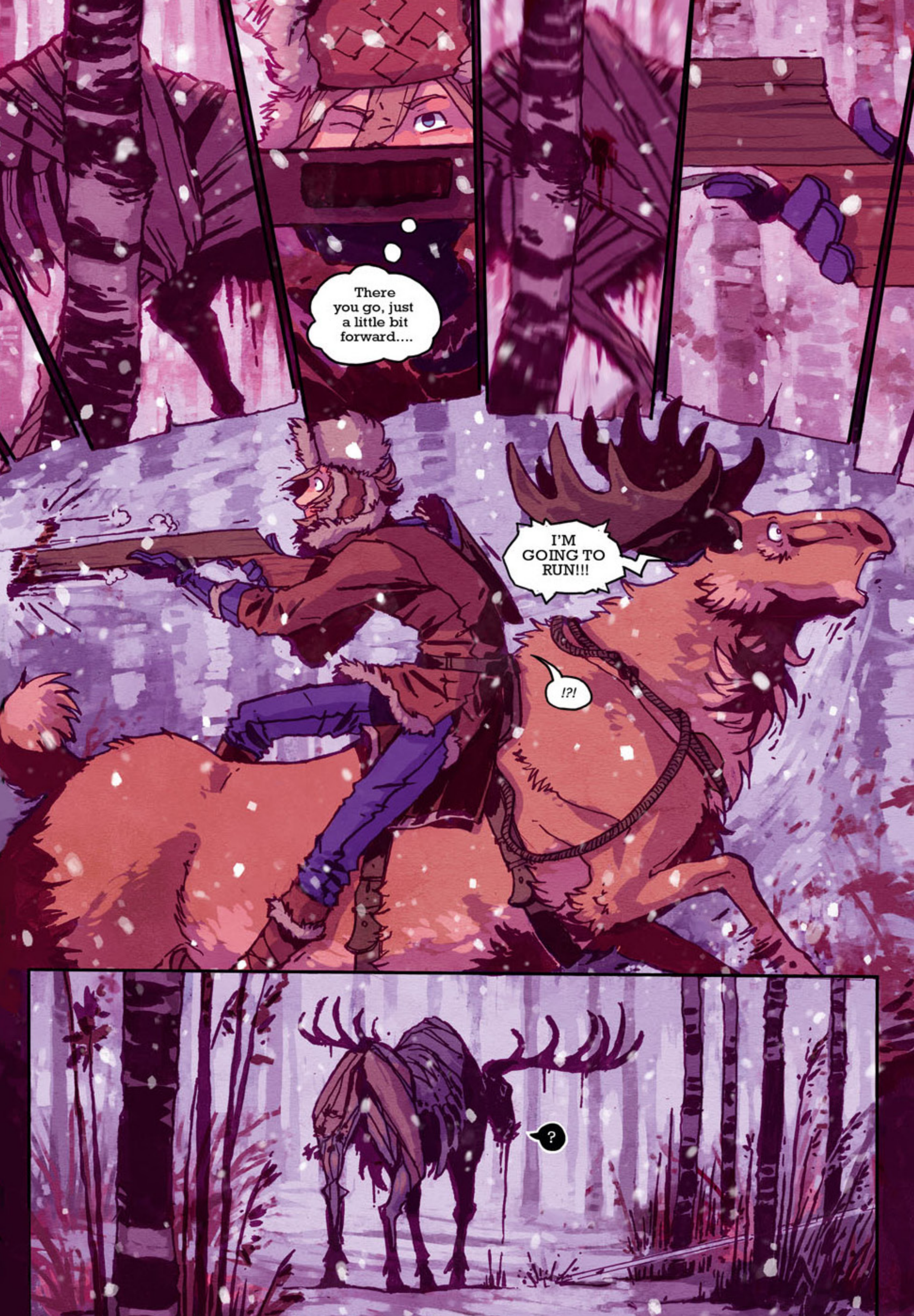

You know...
I really wish I had *something* tangible to help me find this thing.
Looking for tracks probably won't work, since it's snowing...
...and it smells like rotting logs, so I can't pick up its scent with all these trees around.
And I don't know of any other tracking methods.
Do you have any ideas, Hannu?
zZz
Hannu?

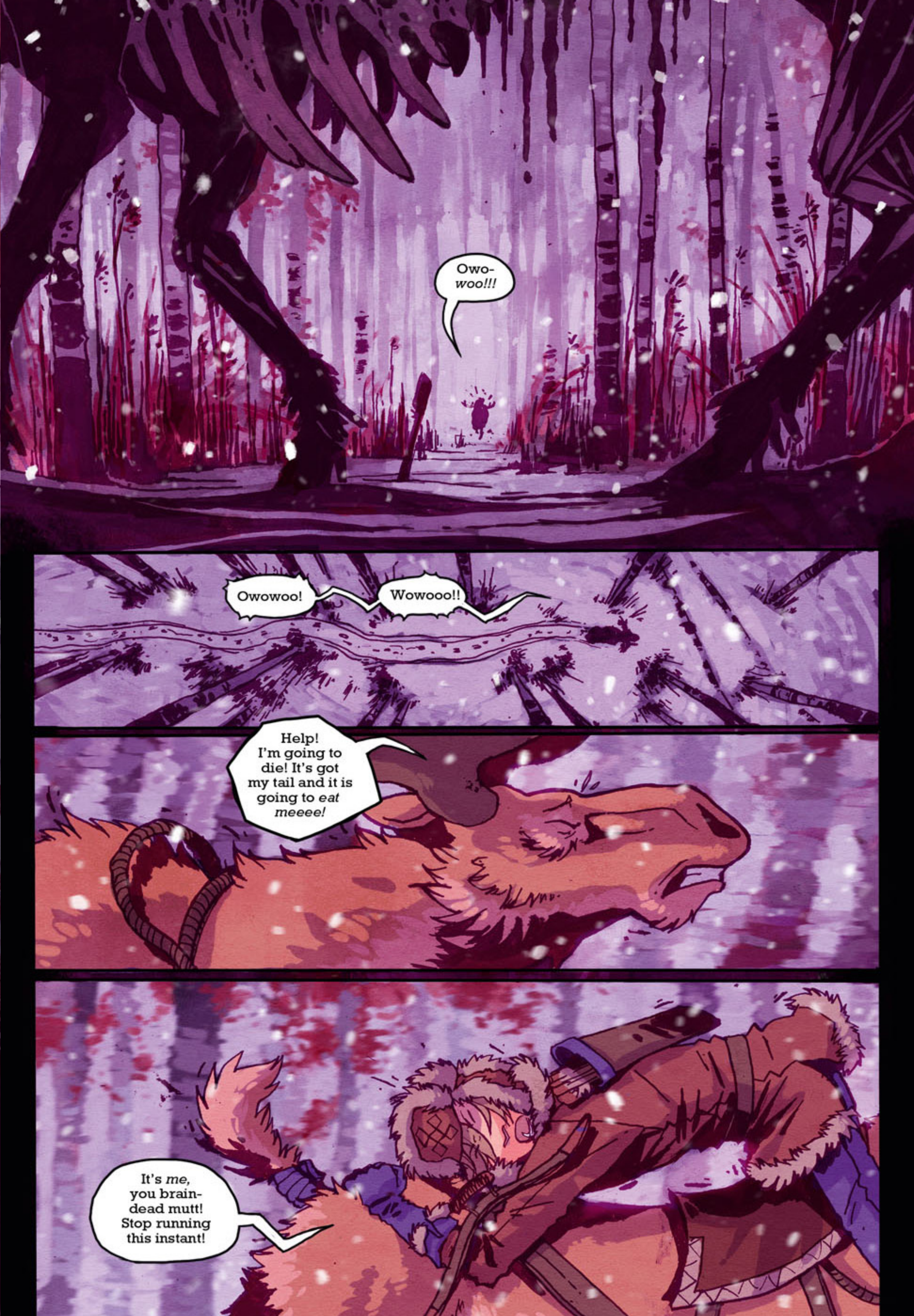

Wake up!
What was that for?!
Ack!
You were sleeping!
I thought you were watching my back!
What if the monster had sneaked up on us from behind?
I wouldn't have seen it anyway. I don't have eyes in the back of my head.
Well grow some! Or we'll be eaten!
Fine, I'll just turn around
And *hopefully* I won't fall off...
Are you happy now?
A *little* happier.

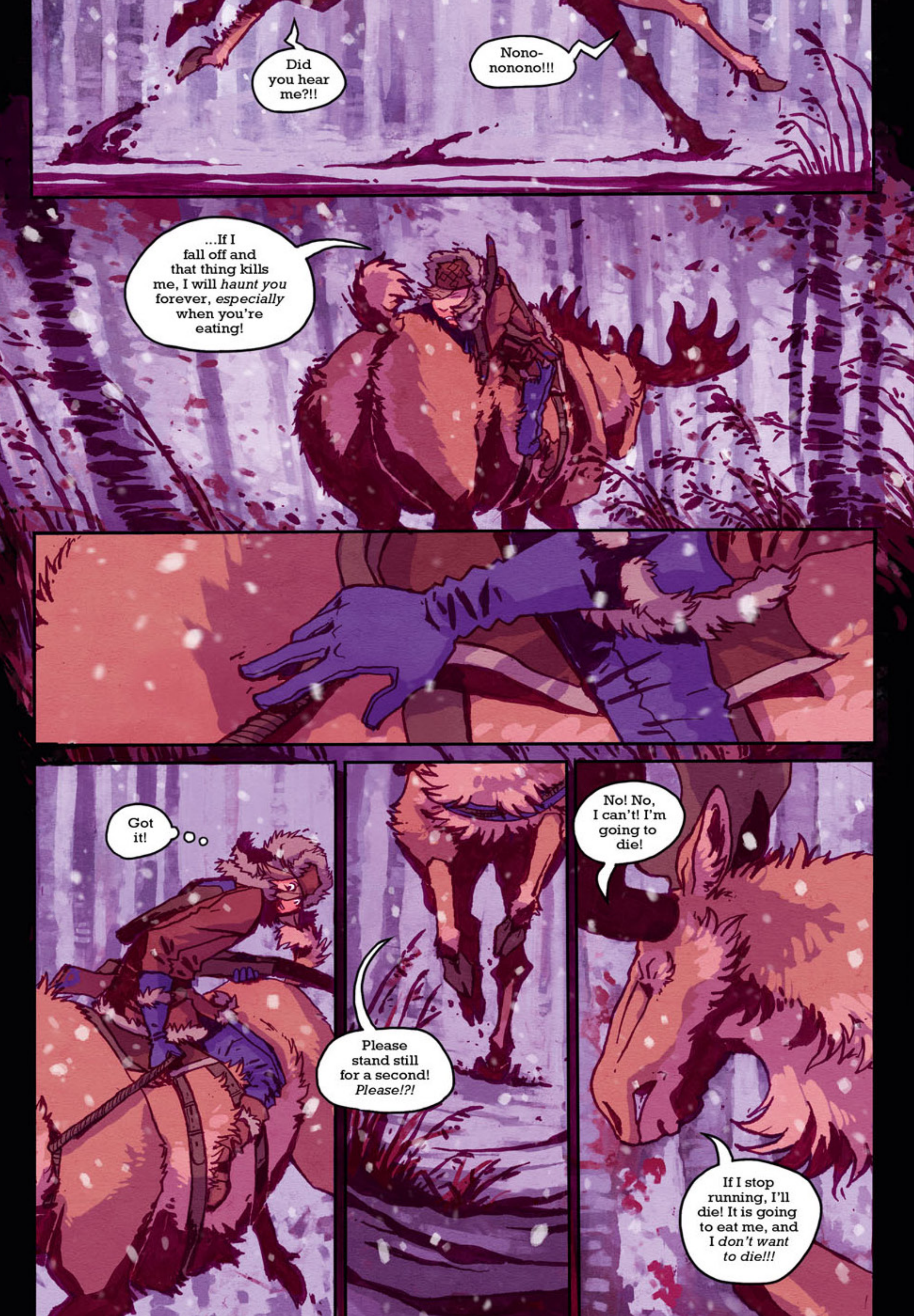

And no sudden movements, okay?
It's difficult enough trying to sit here as it is.
Of course.
And Hannu...
...I'm really sorry I've been acting so snippy towards you.
I don't want to be fighting with you any longer. Will you forgive me?
Uhh... Sure, all is forgiven.
I didn't even know we were still fighting.
Good.
That makes me glad.

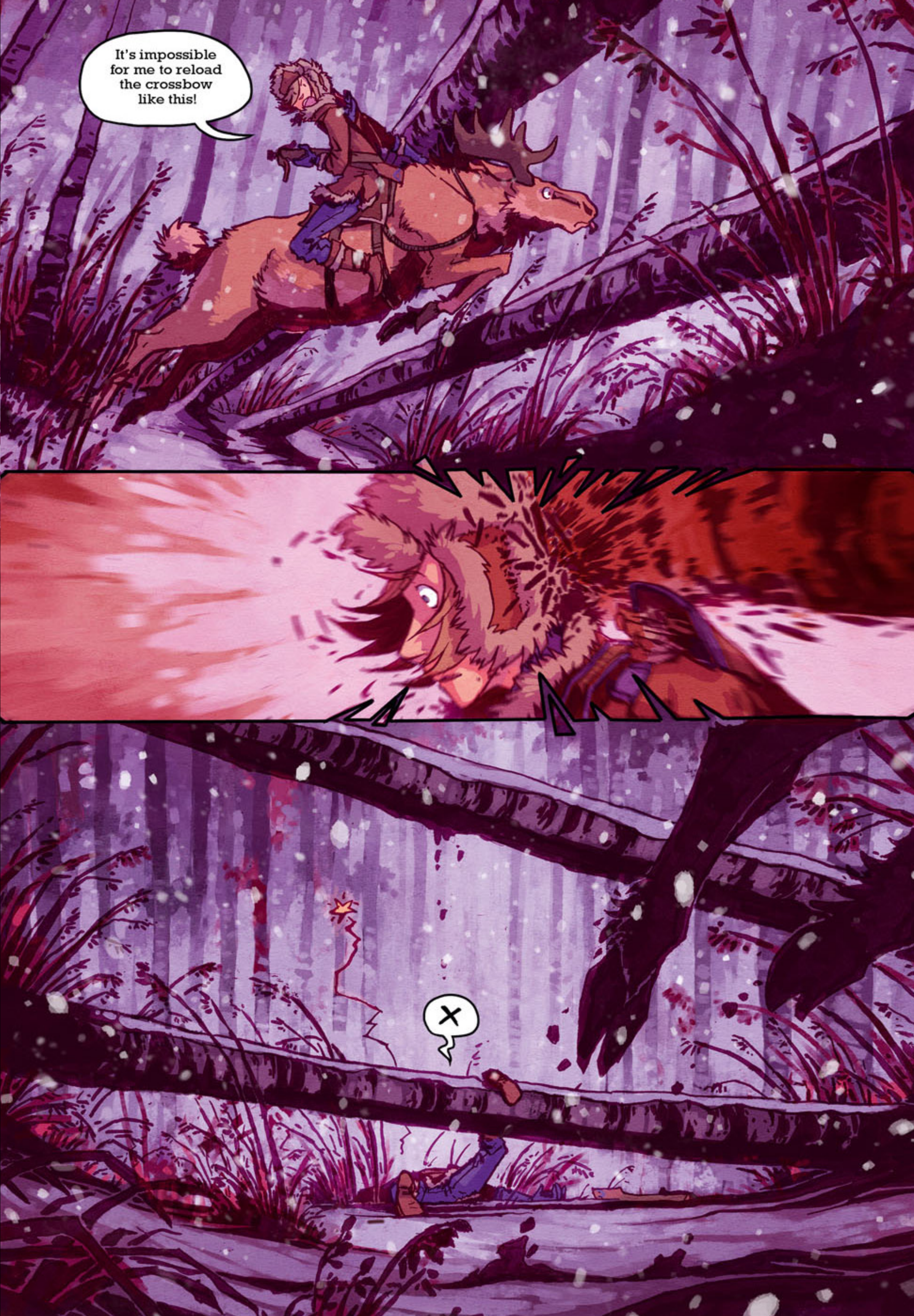

...!
Well, well. I guess we *do* have some good luck after all.
Ville, stand still now. Target acquired!
Wh-what!?

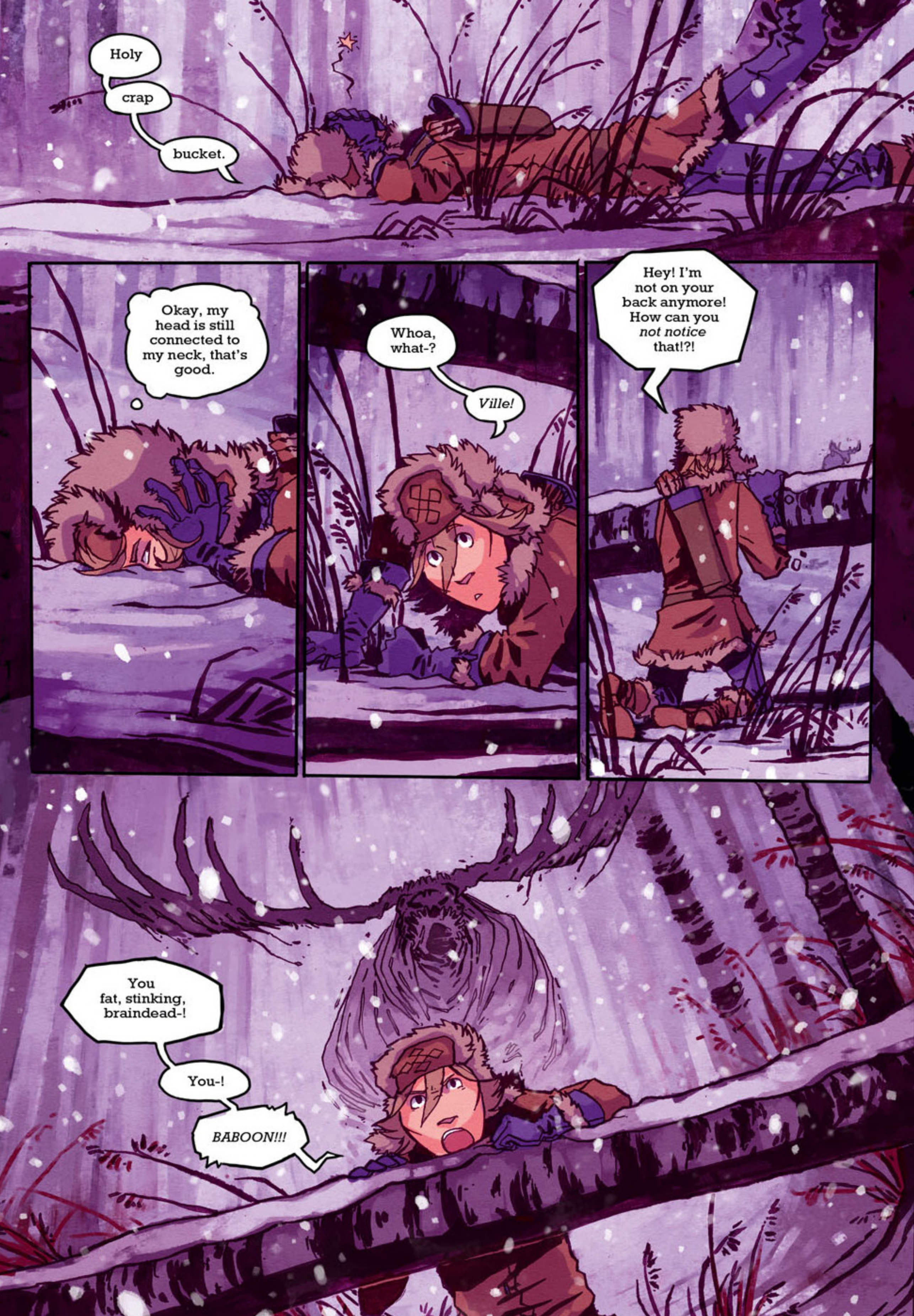

It hasn't noticed us yet.
Run away! Run away! Run away!
I think I can hit it from here. Ville, *don't move!*
Run away!
"Ville, don't move!"
Run away!
"Don't move!"
Run away!
Come on, take a step forward. Show your flank...

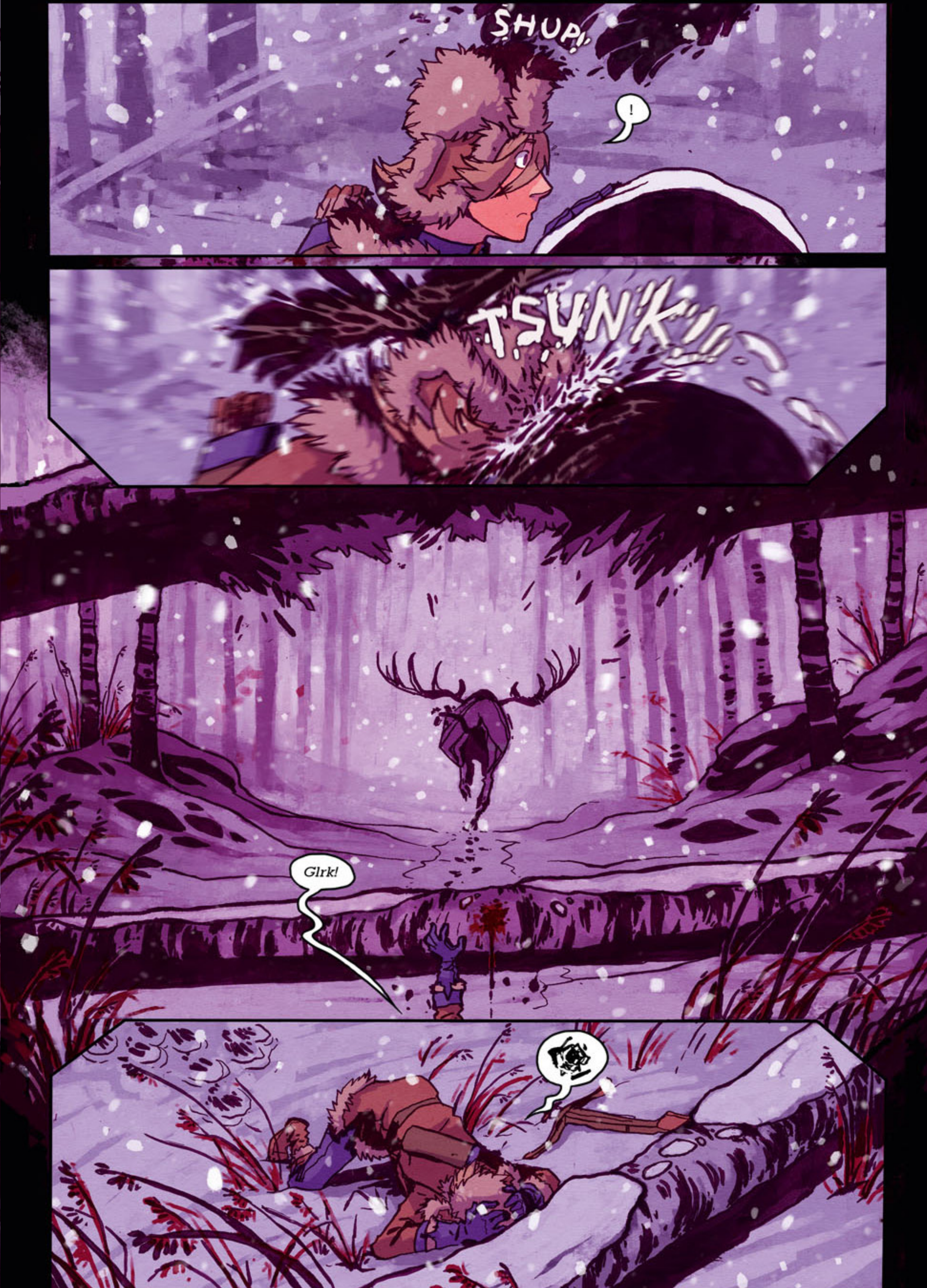

There you go, just a little bit forward....
I'M GOING TO RUN!!!
!?!
?

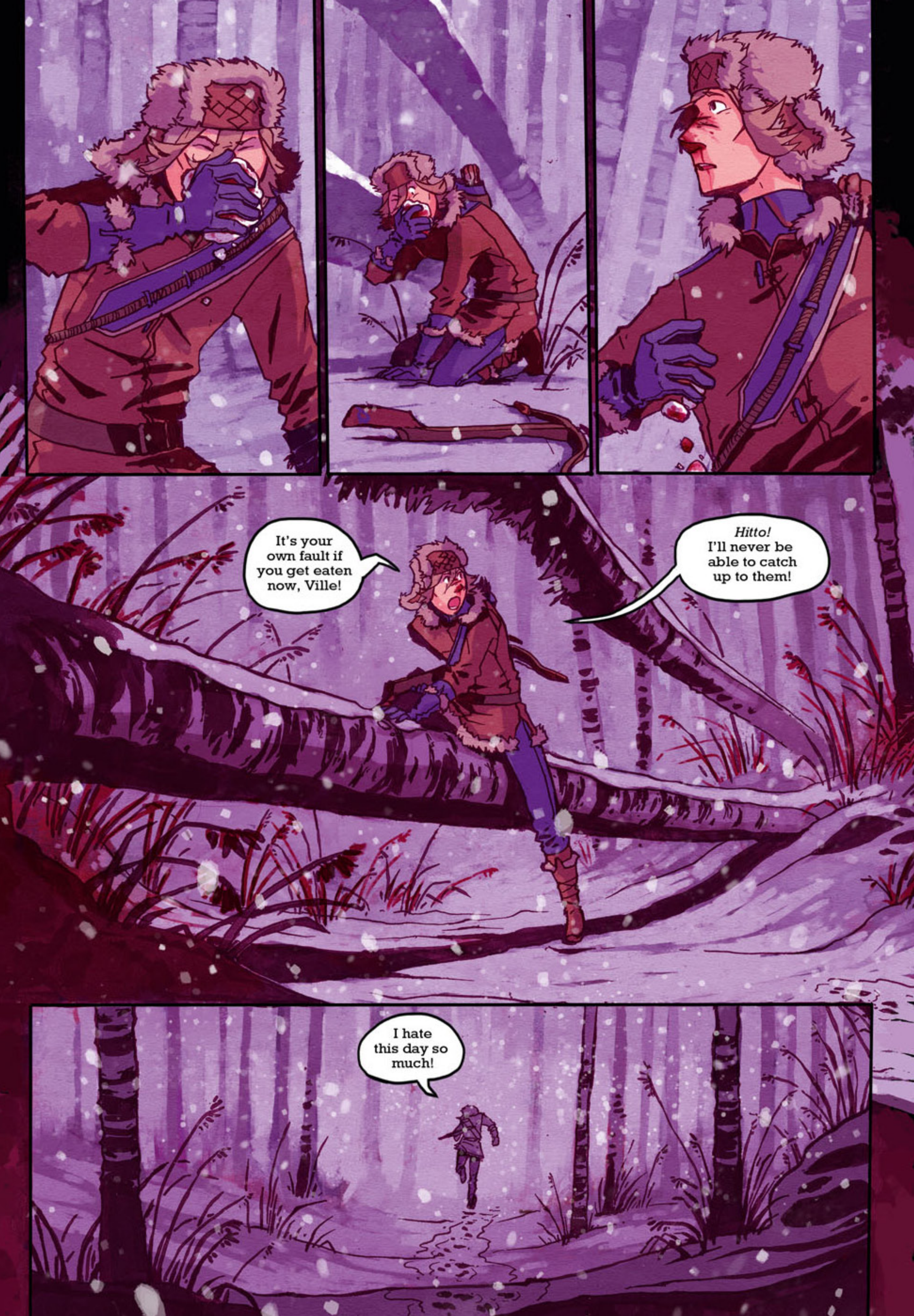

Owo-*woo!!!*
Owowoo!
Wowooo!!
Help! I'm going to die! It's got my tail and it is going to *eat meeee!*
It's *me,* you brain-dead mutt! Stop running this instant!

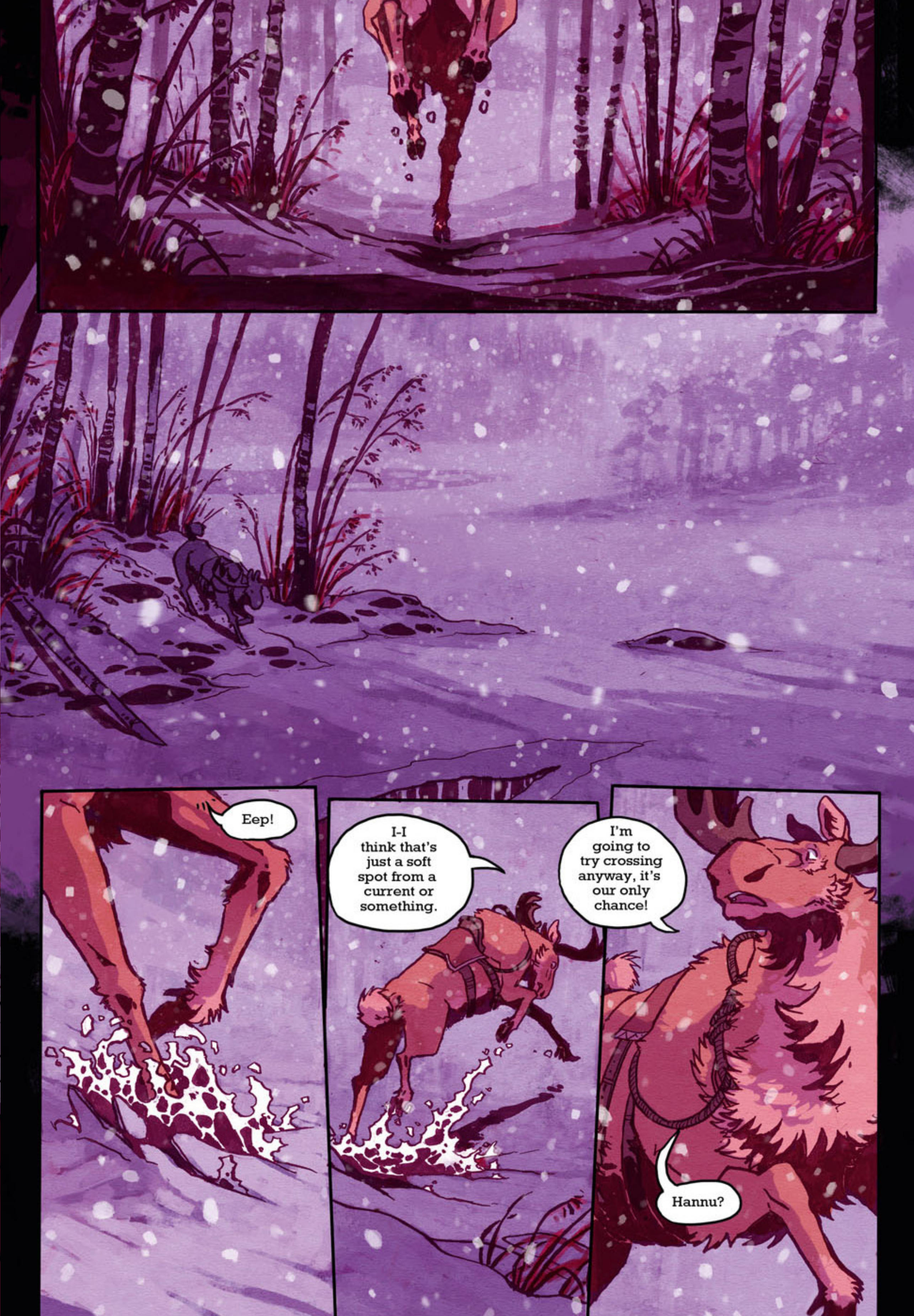

Did you hear me?!!
Nono-nononono!!!
...If I fall off and that thing kills me, I will *haunt you* forever, *especially* when you're eating!
Got it!
Please stand still for a second! *Please!?!*
No! No, I can't! I'm going to die!
If I stop running, I'll die! It is going to eat me, and I *don't want to die!!!*

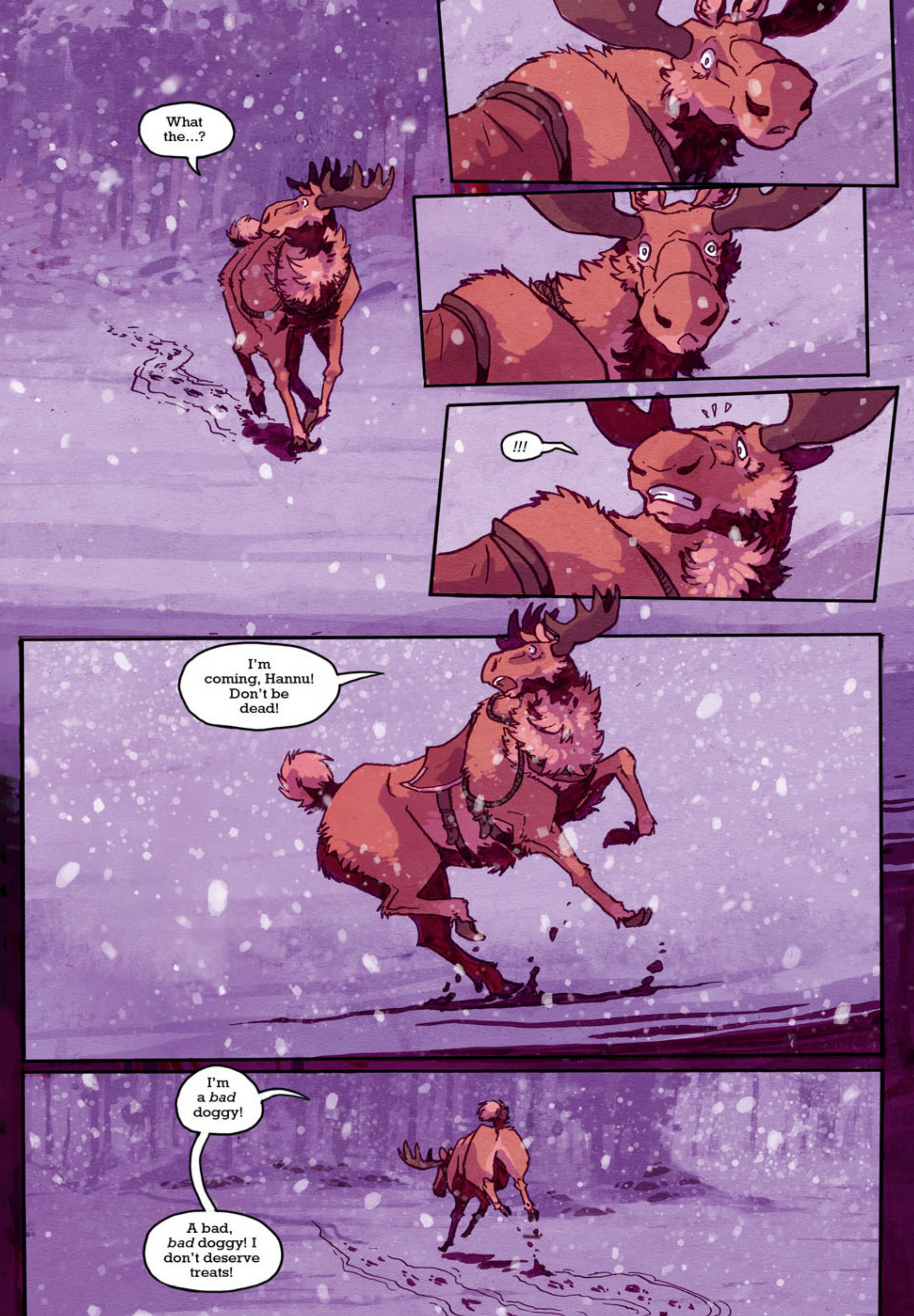

It's impossible for me to reload the crossbow like this!
×

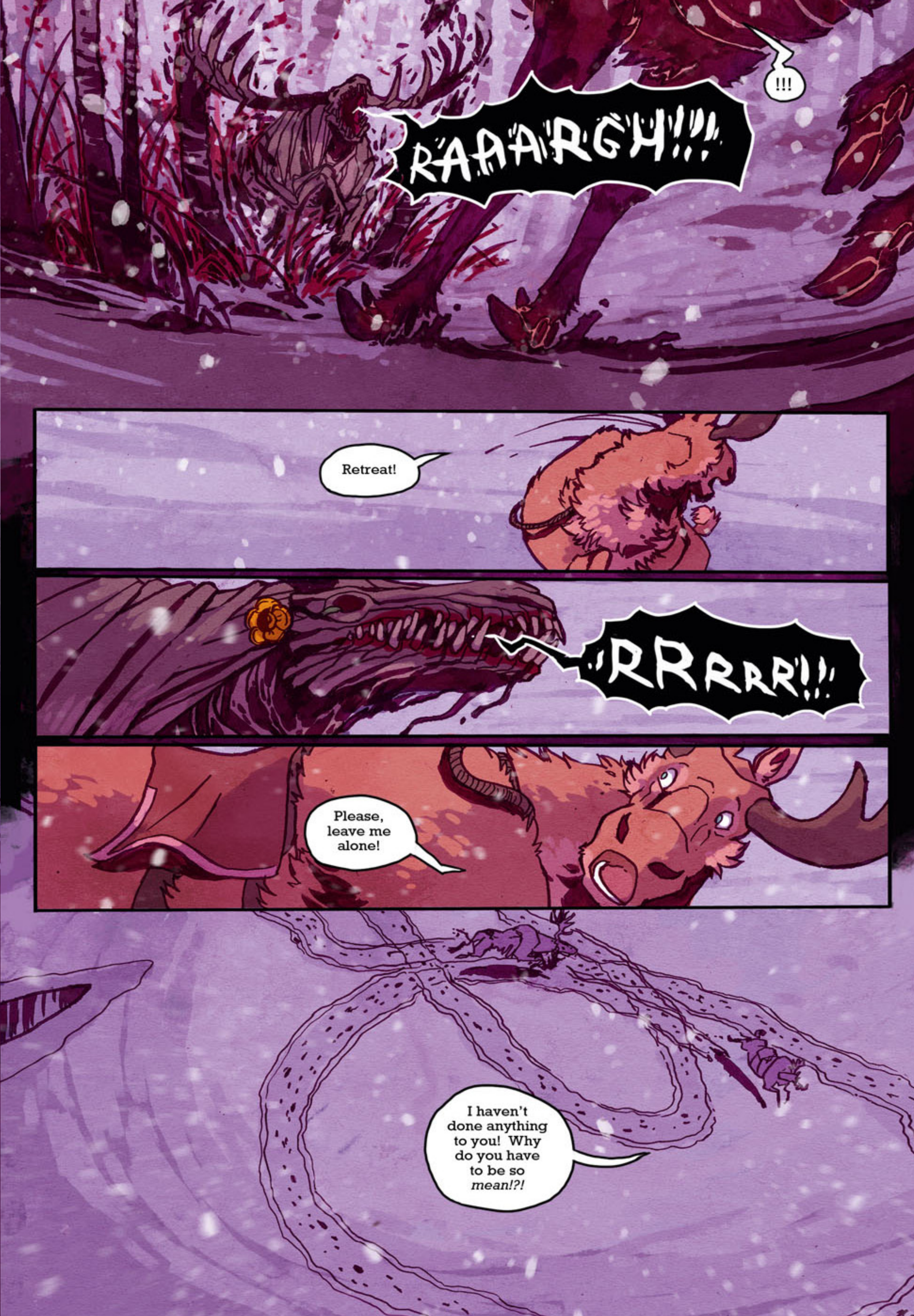

Holy
crap
bucket.
Okay, my head is still connected to my neck, that's good.
Whoa, what-?
Ville!
Hey! I'm not on your back anymore! How can you *not notice* that!?!
You fat, stinking, braindead-!
You-!
BABOON!!!

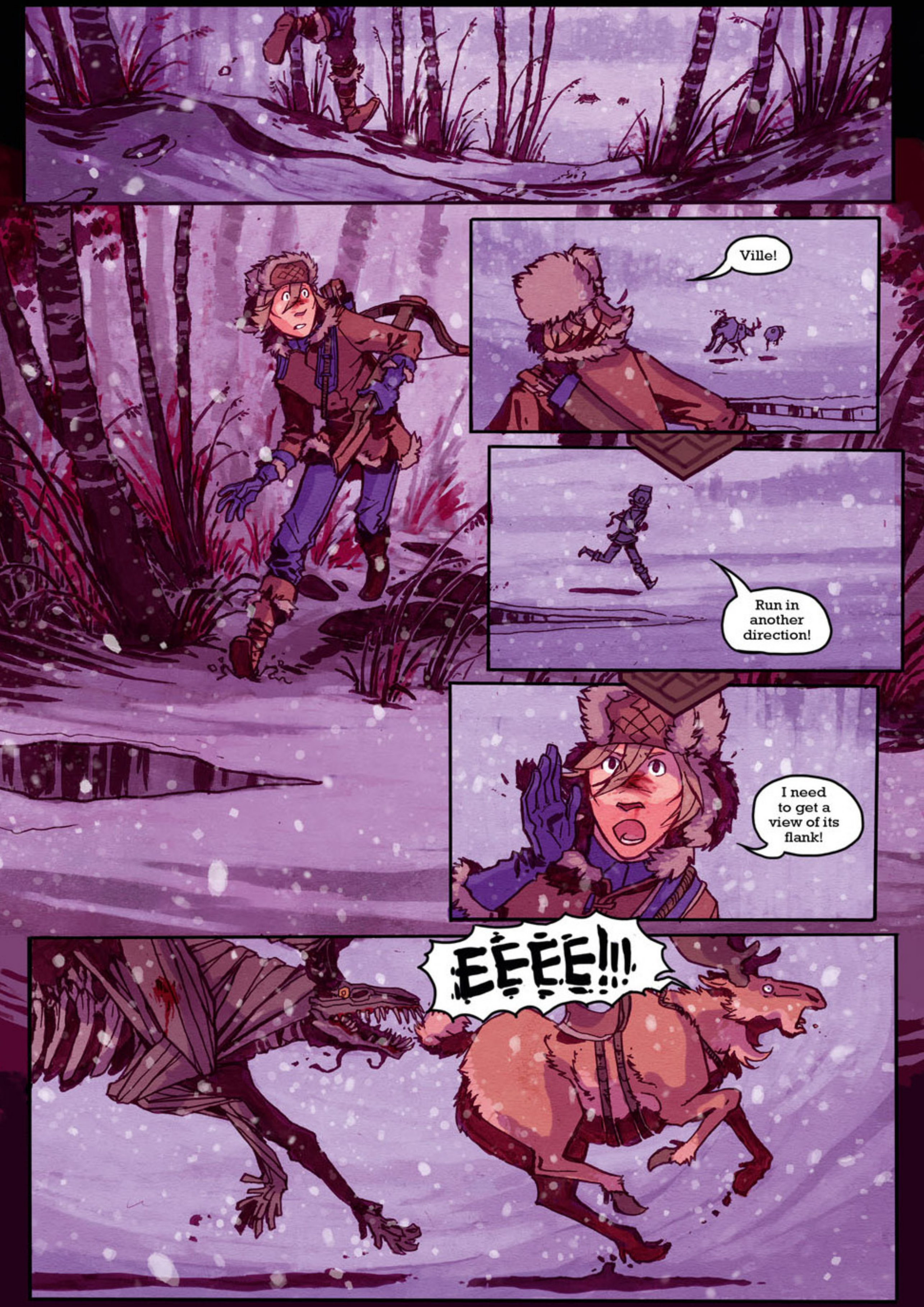

SHUP!
!
TSUNK!!
Glrk!

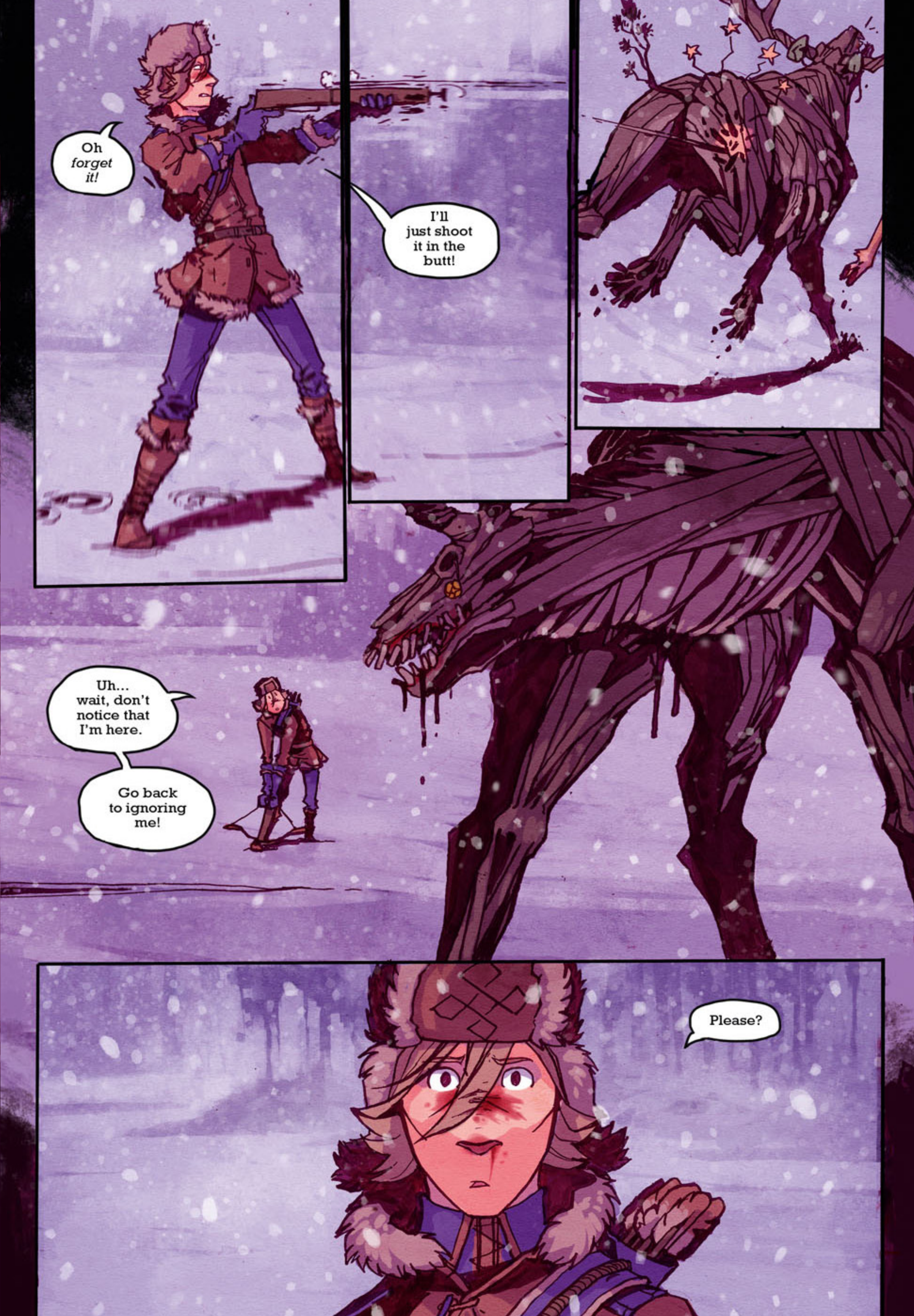

It's your own fault if you get eaten now, Ville!
Hitto! I'll never be able to catch up to them!
I hate this day so much!

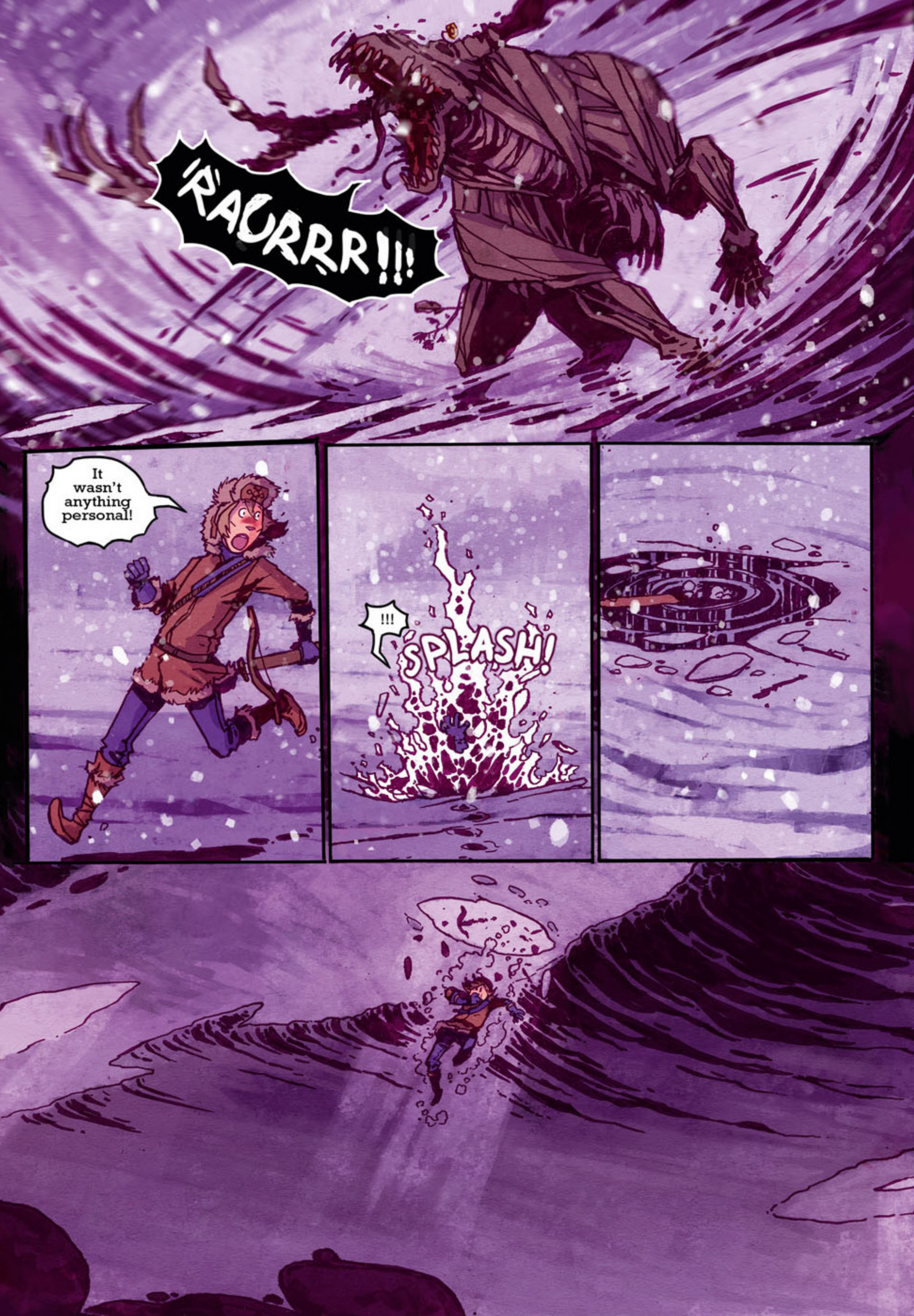

Eep!
I-I think that's just a soft spot from a current or something.
I'm going to try crossing anyway, it's our only chance!
Hannu?

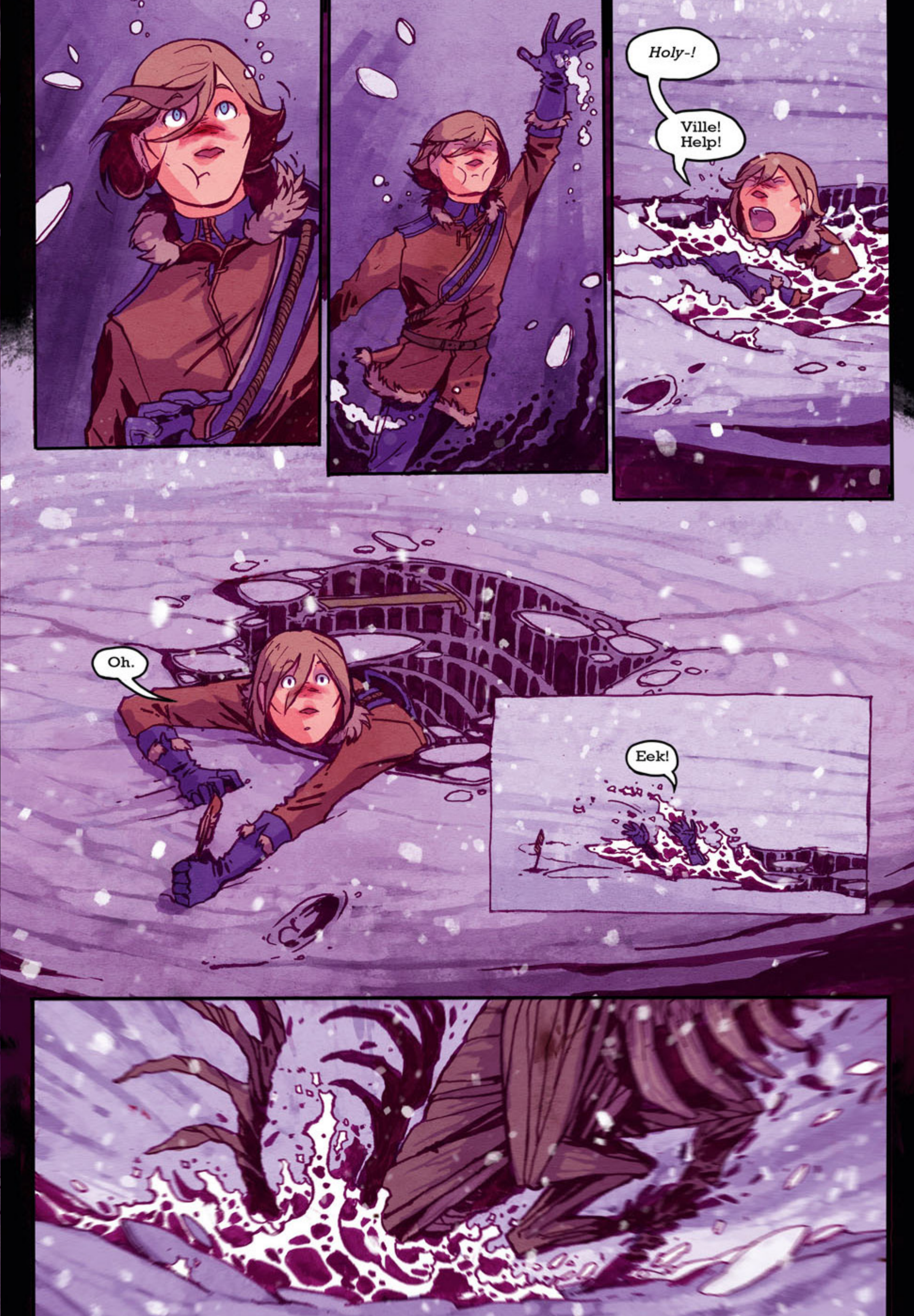

What the...?
!!!
I'm coming, Hannu! Don't be dead!
I'm a *bad* doggy!
A bad, *bad* doggy! I don't deserve treats!

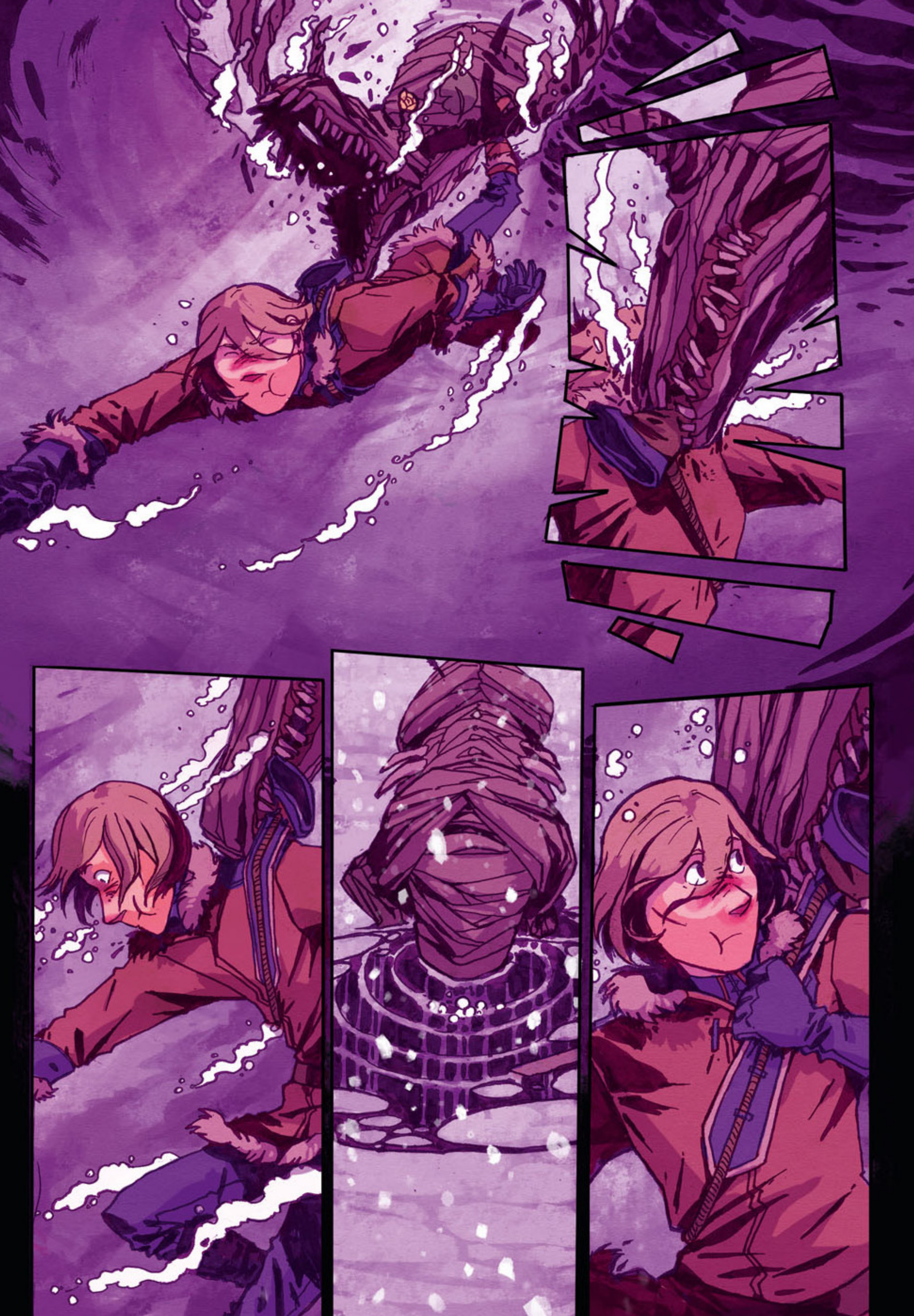

RAAARGH!!!
!!!
Retreat!
RRrrrR!!
Please, leave me alone!
I haven't done anything to you! Why do you have to be so *mean!?!*

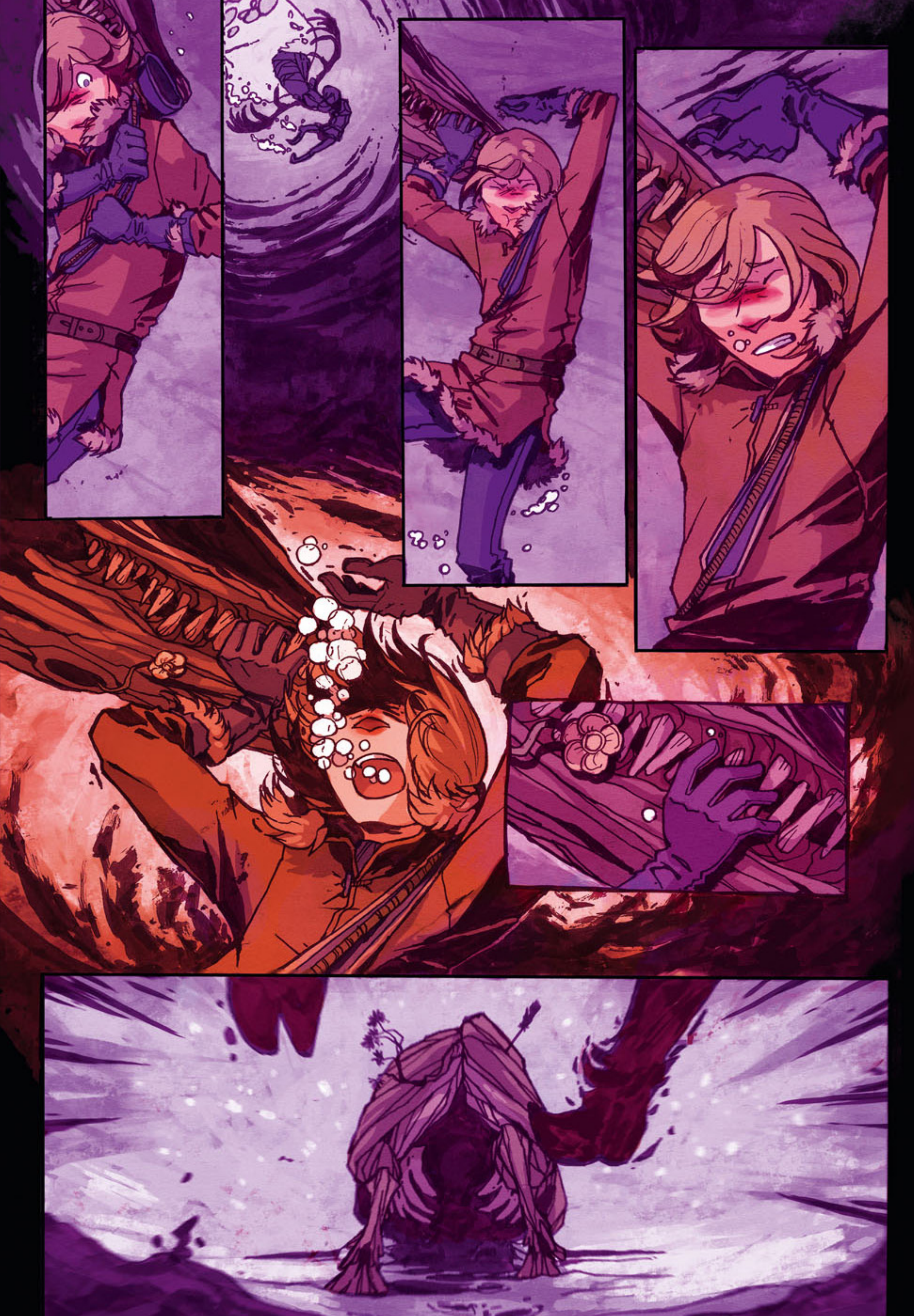

Ville!
Run in another direction!
I need to get a view of its flank!
EEEE!!!

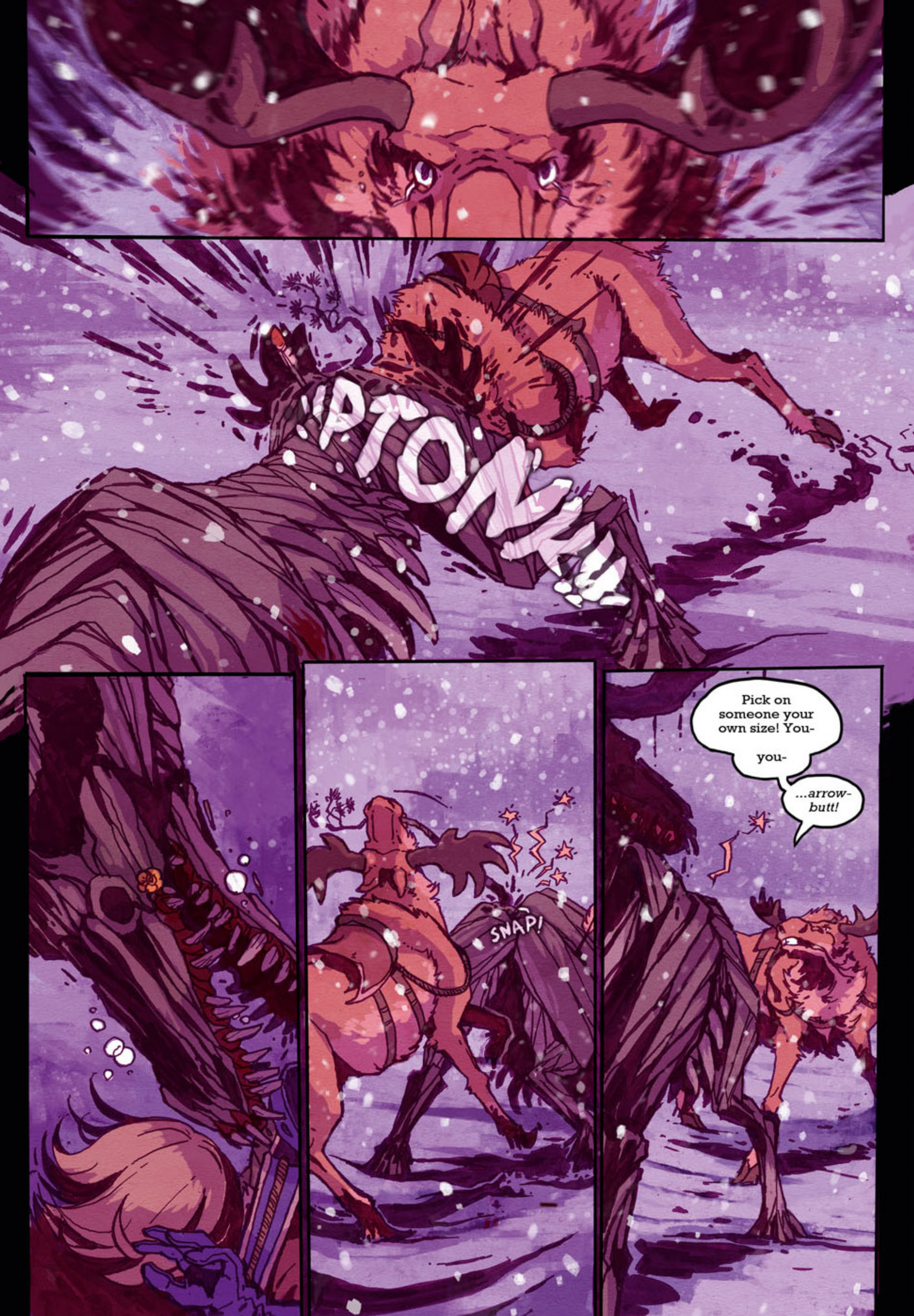

Oh *forget* it!
I'll just shoot it in the butt!
Uh… wait, don't notice that I'm here.
Go back to ignoring me!
Please?

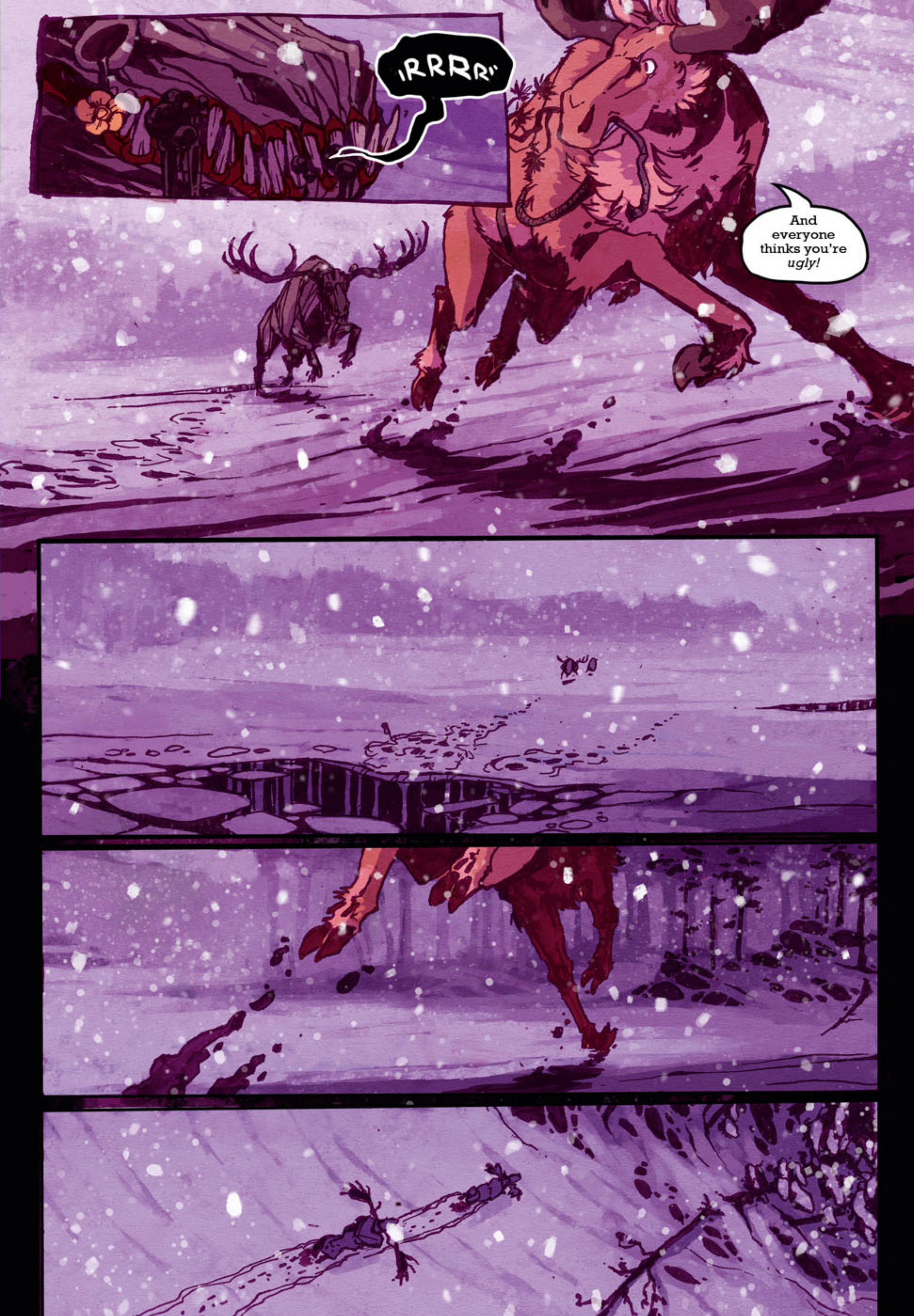

RAURRR!!!
It wasn't anything personal!
!!!
SPLASH!

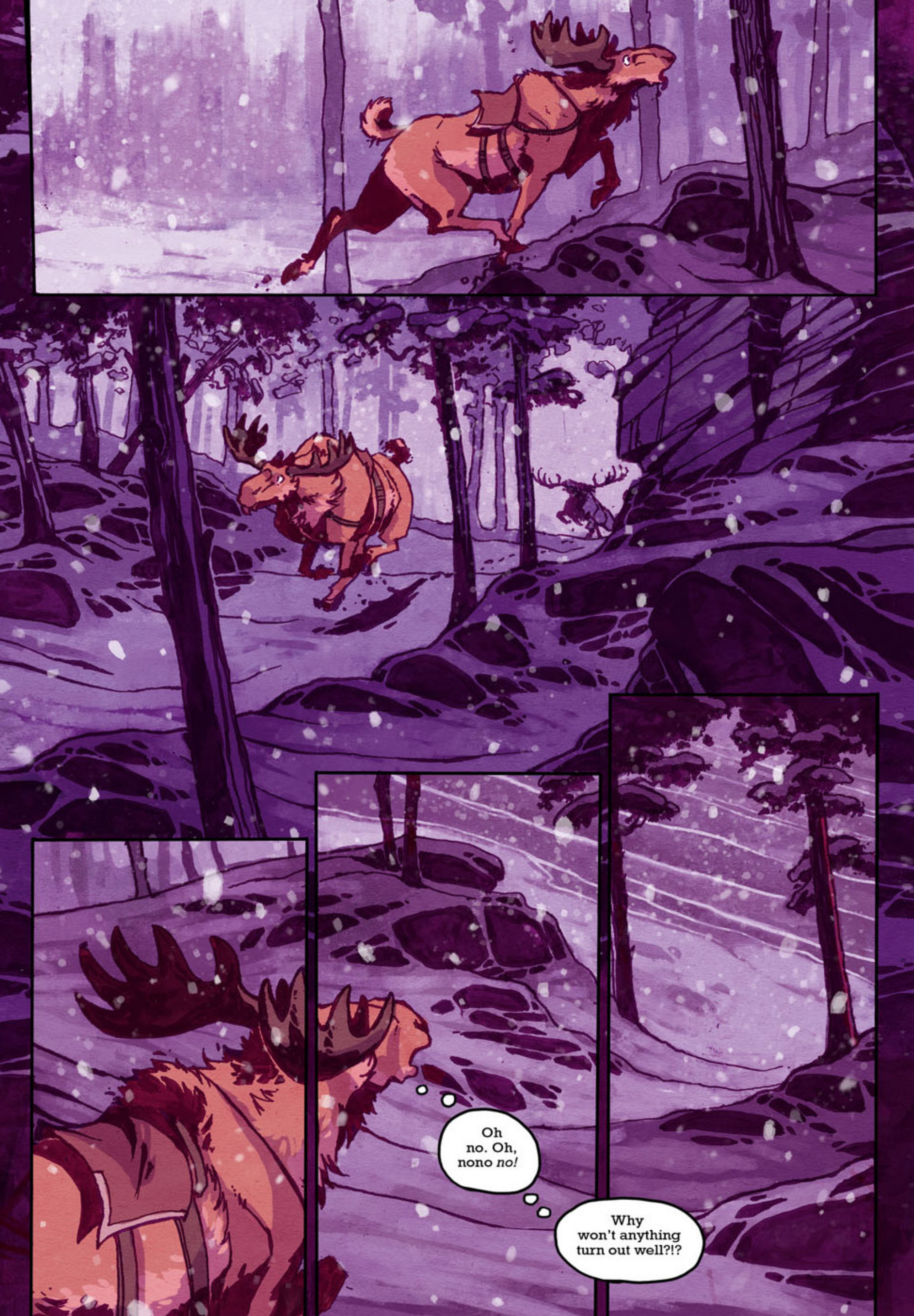

Holy-!
Ville! Help!
Oh.
Eek!

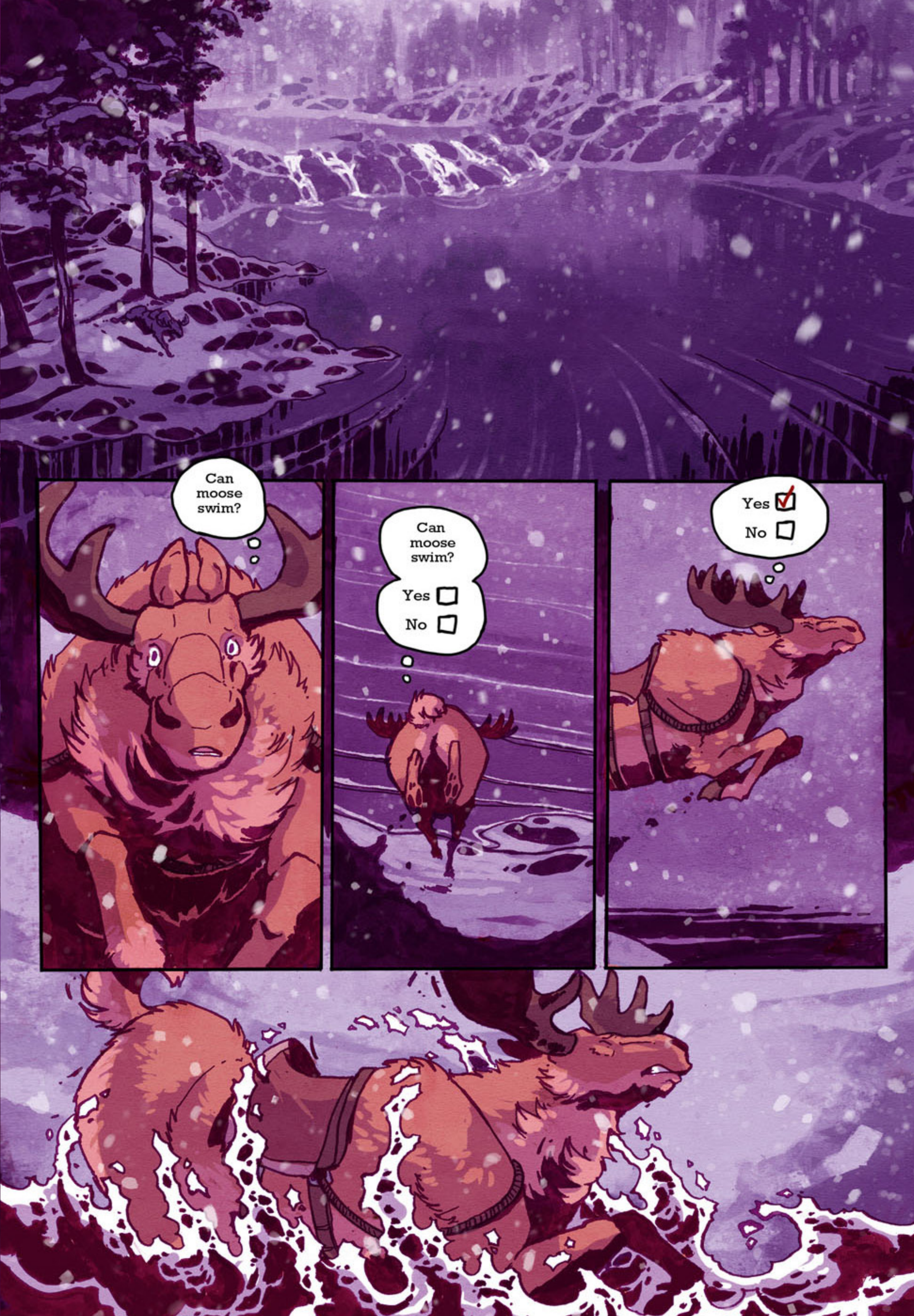


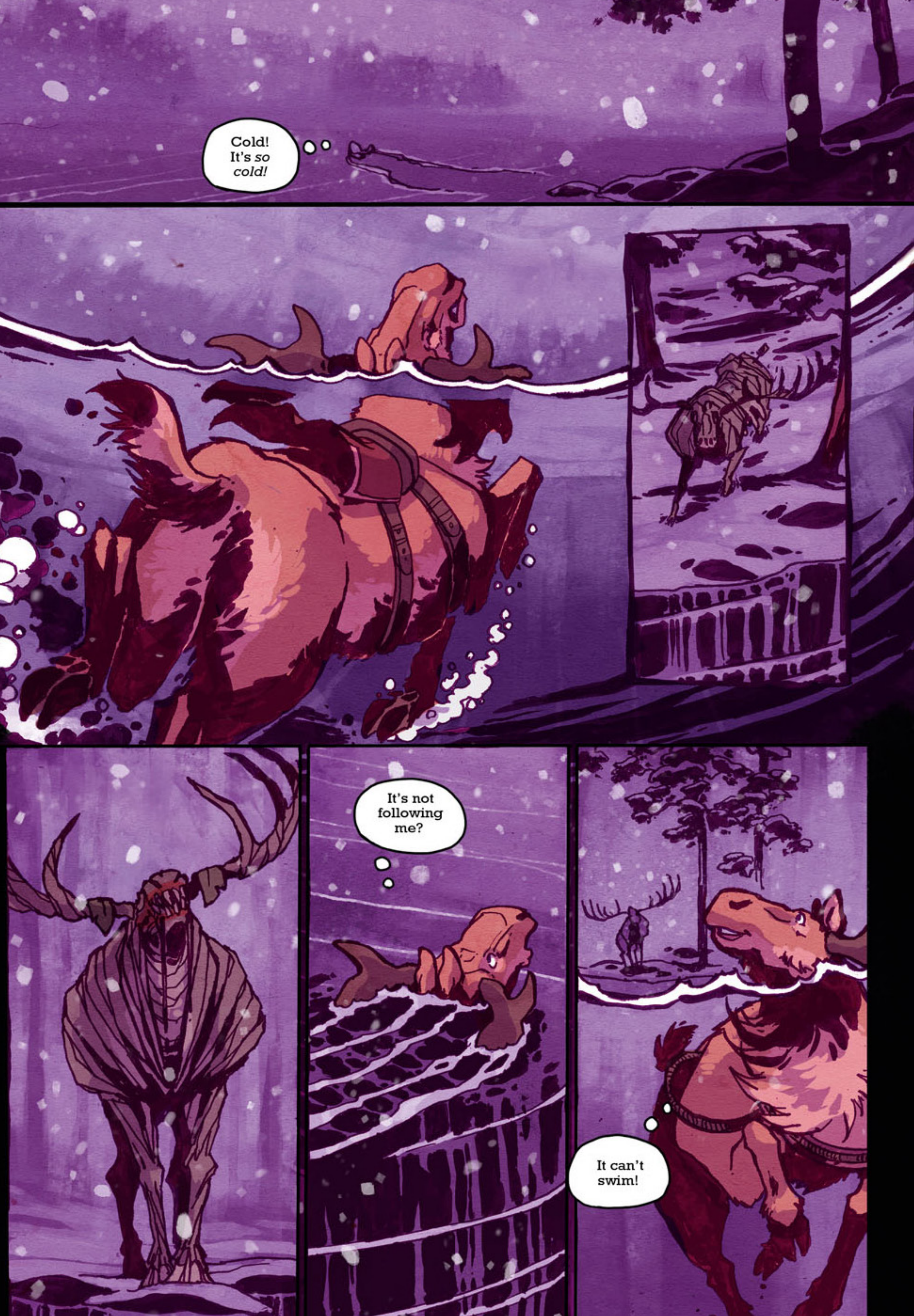


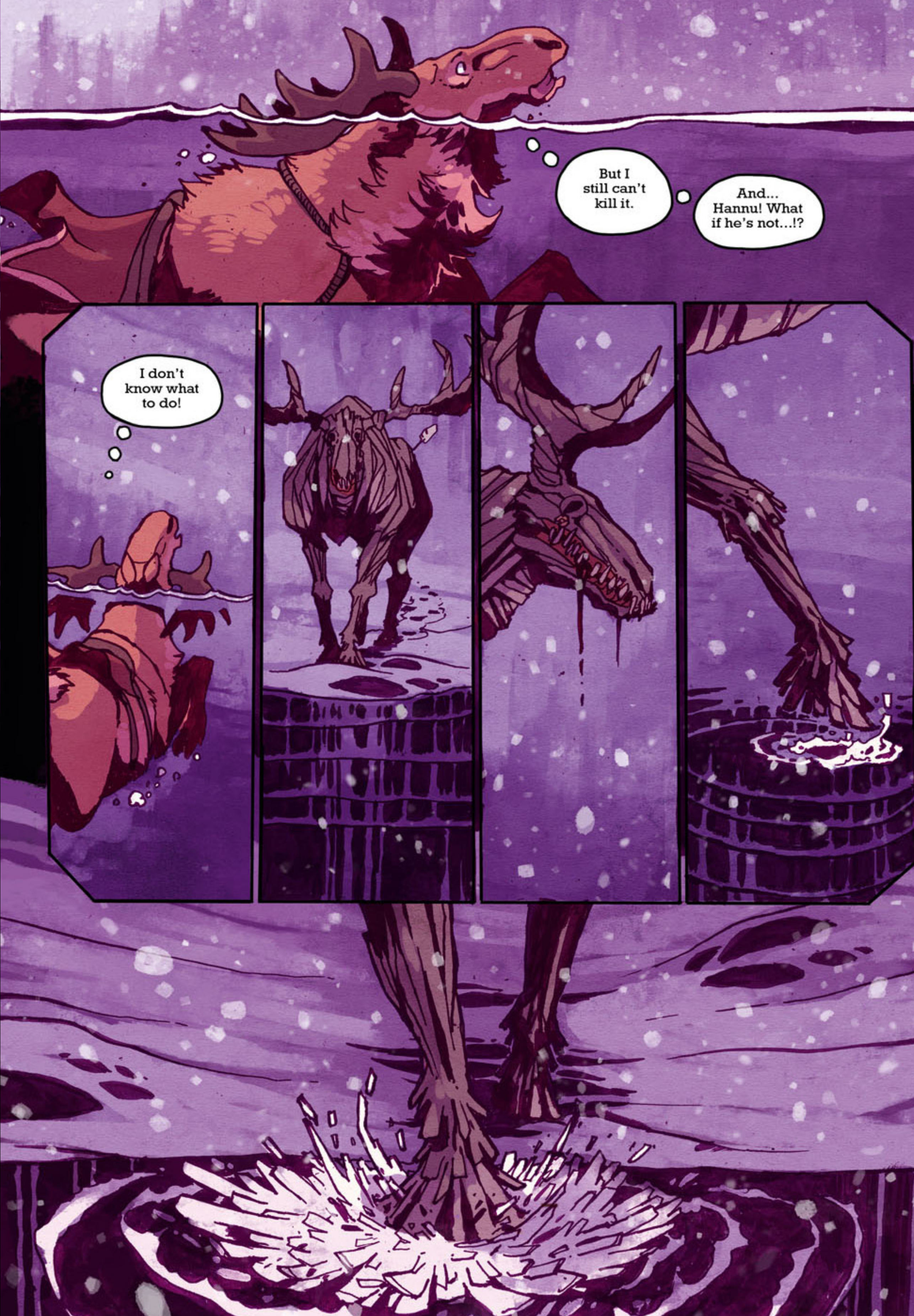

PTONK!!
SNAP!
Pick on someone your own size! You-
you-
...arrow-butt!

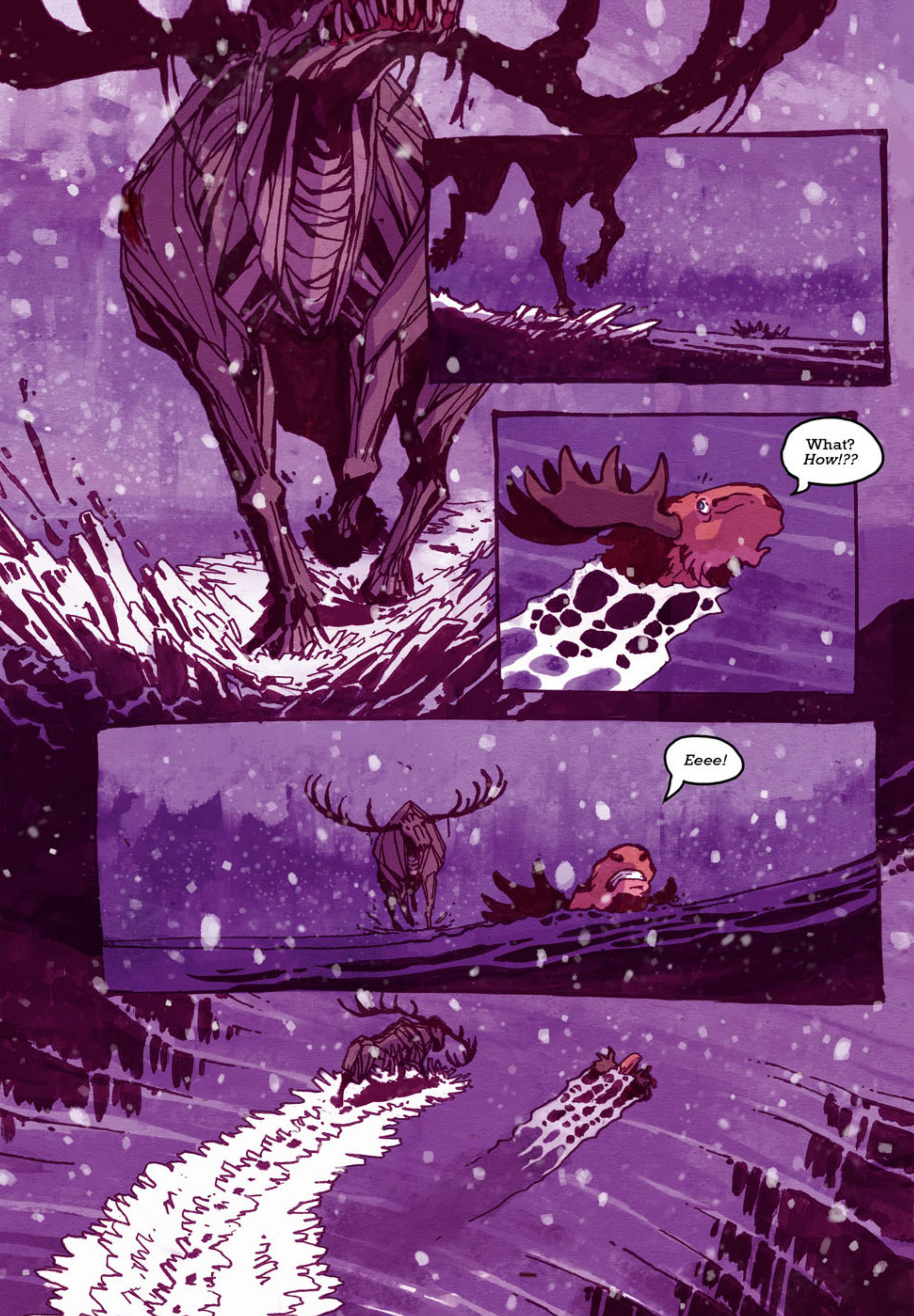

'RRRRr'
And everyone thinks you're *ugly!*

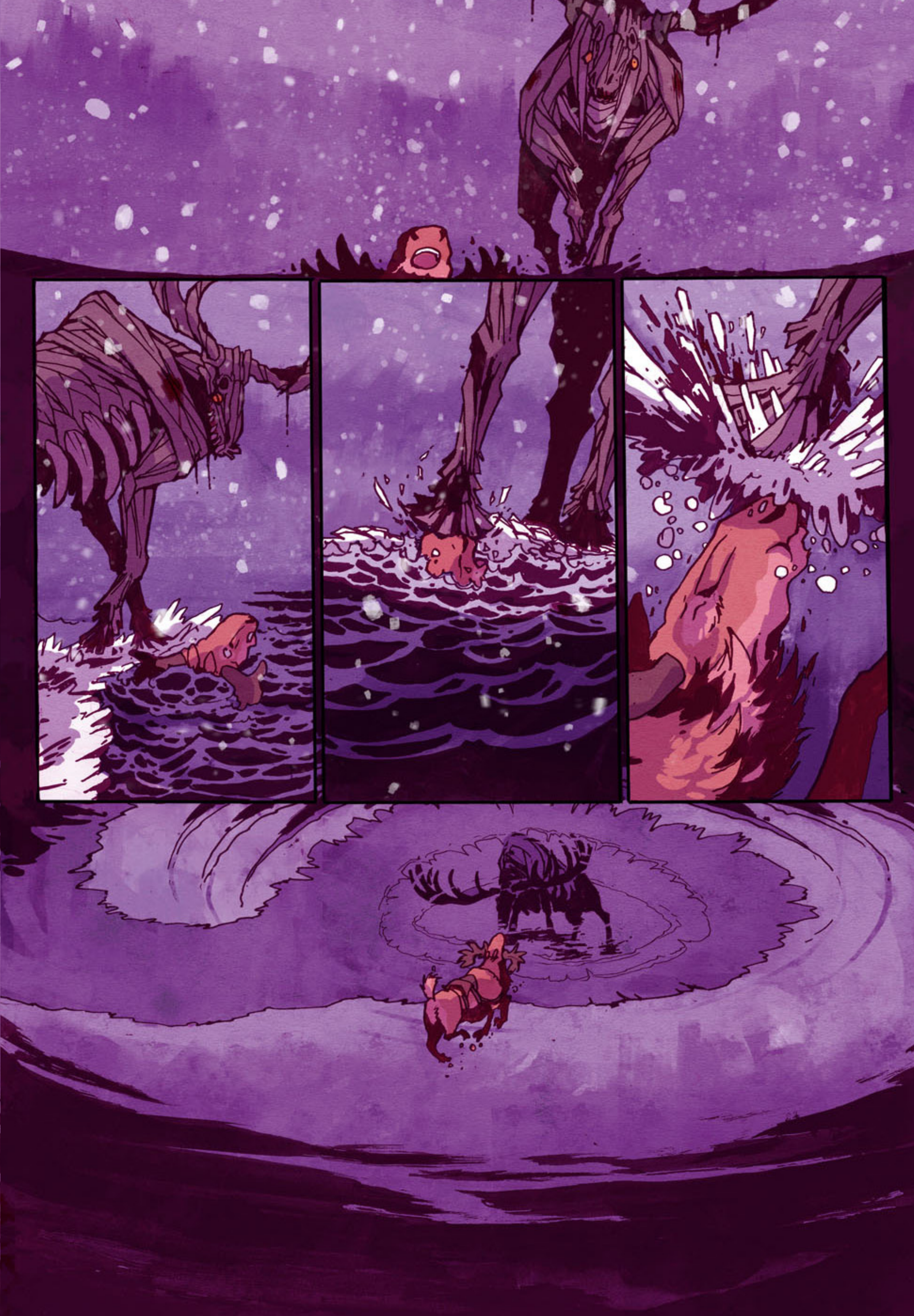

Oh no. Oh, nono *no!*
Why won't anything turn out well?!?

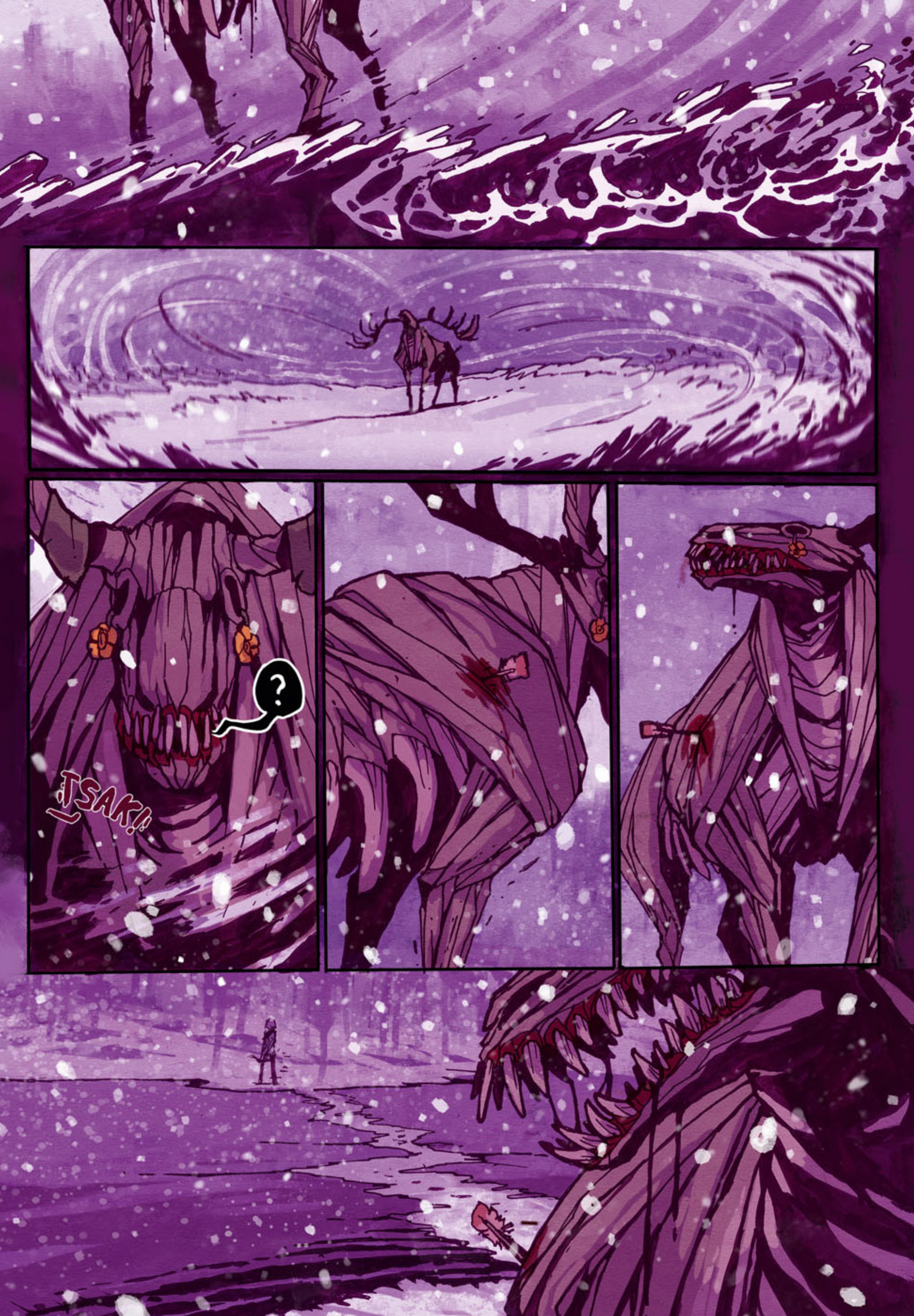

Can moose swim?
Can moose swim? Yes ☐ No ☐
Yes ☑ No ☐

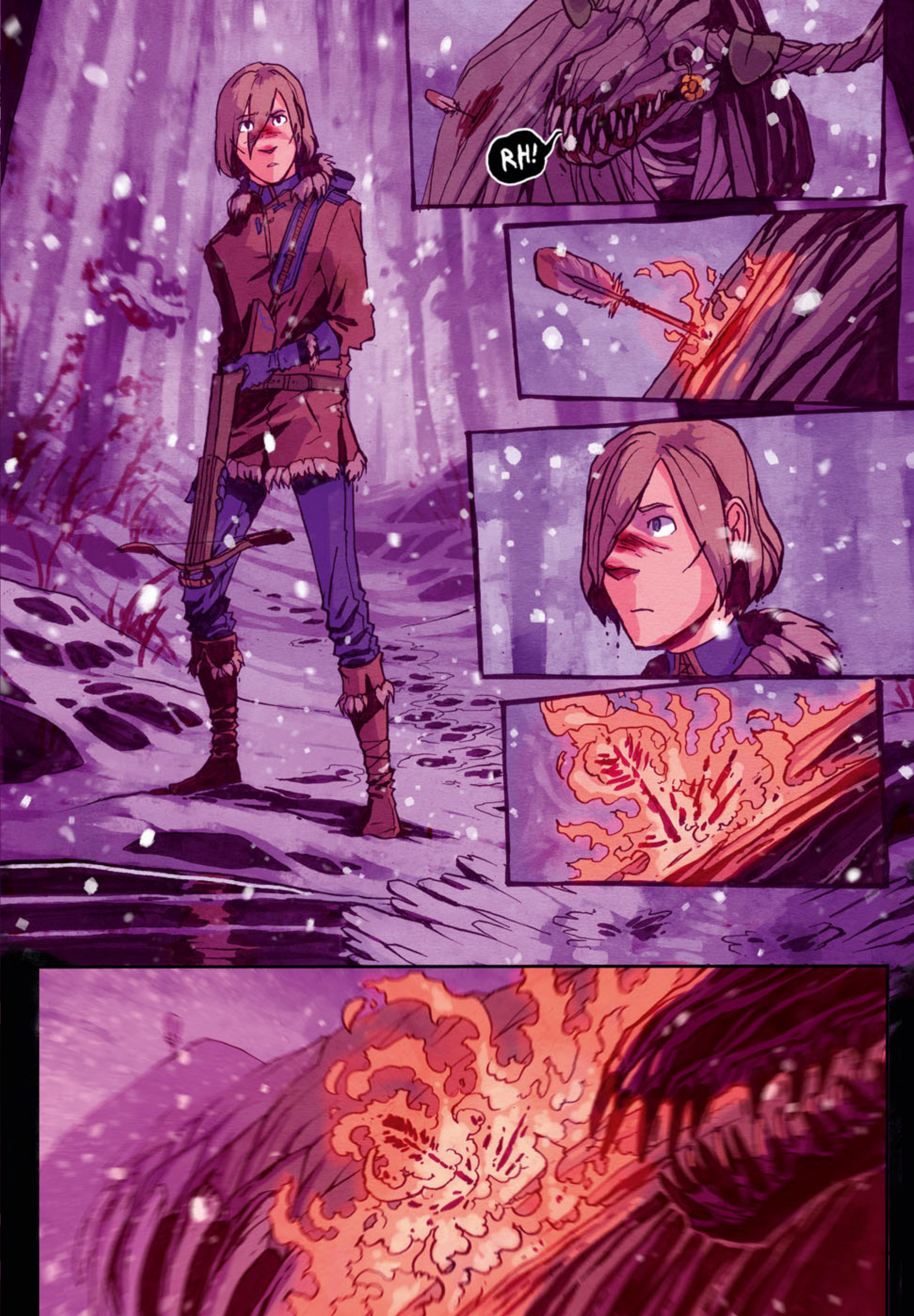

Cold! It's so cold!
It's not following me?
It can't swim!

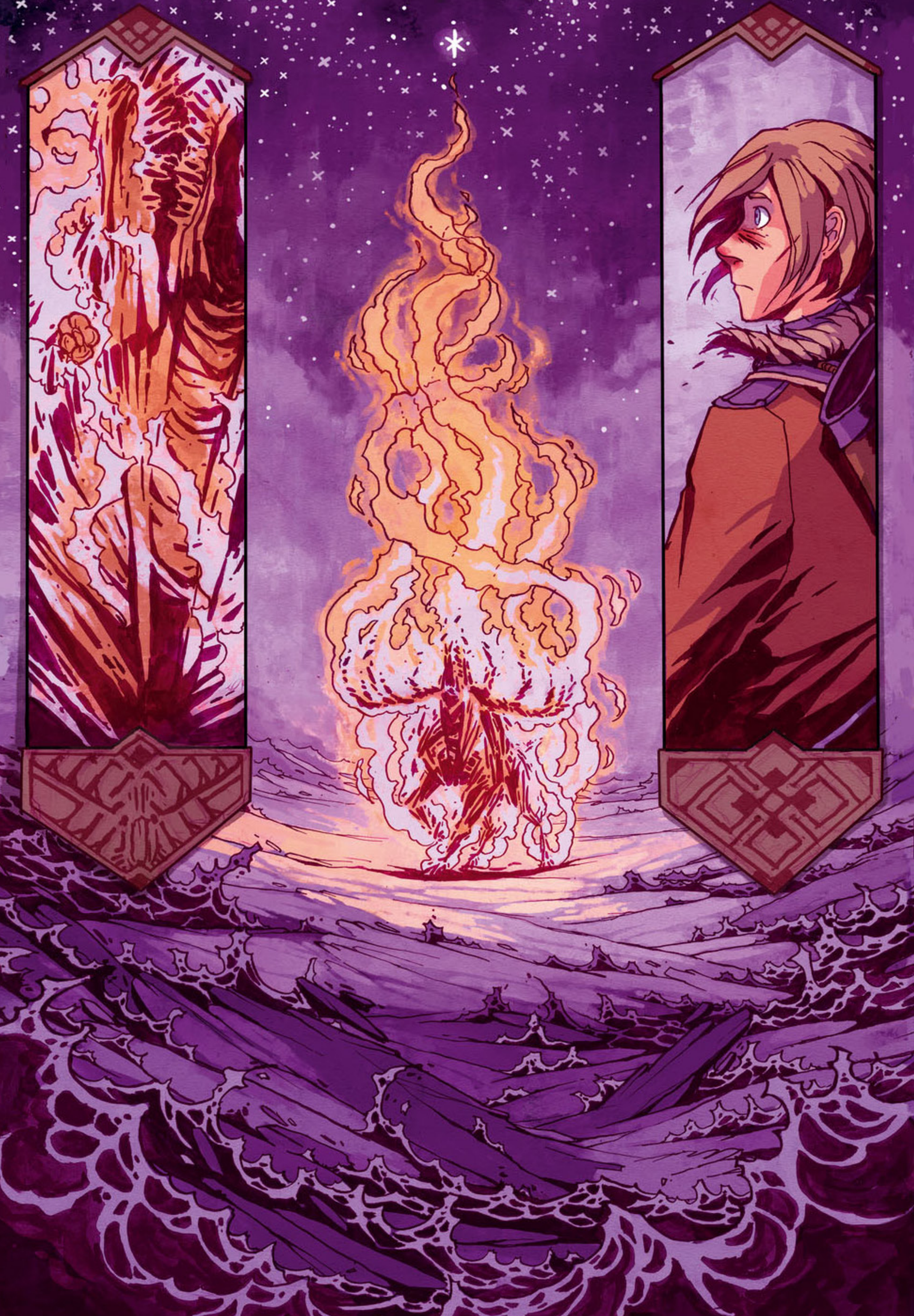

But I still can't kill it.
And... Hannu! What if he's not...!?
I don't know what to do!

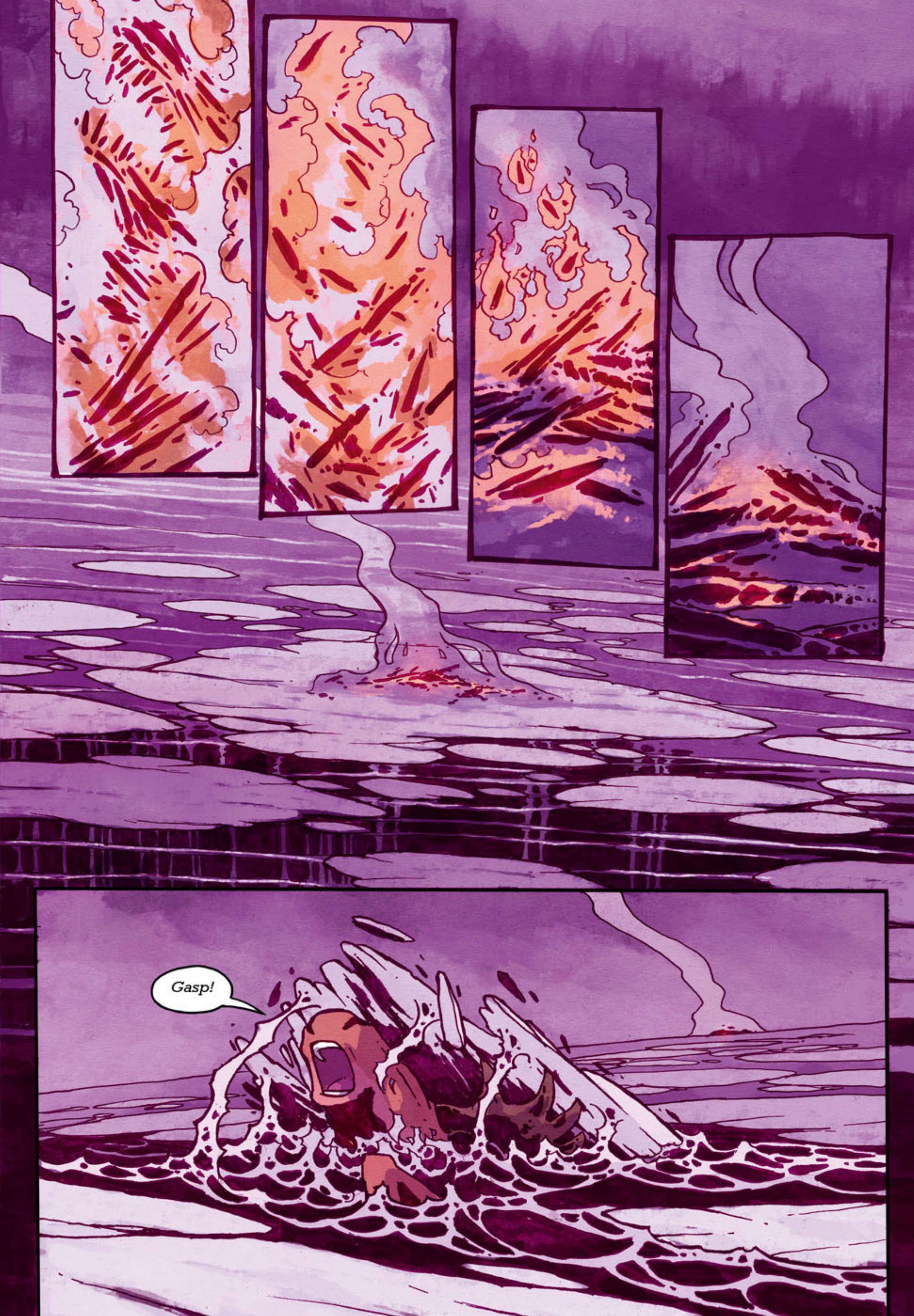

What? *How!??*
Eeee!

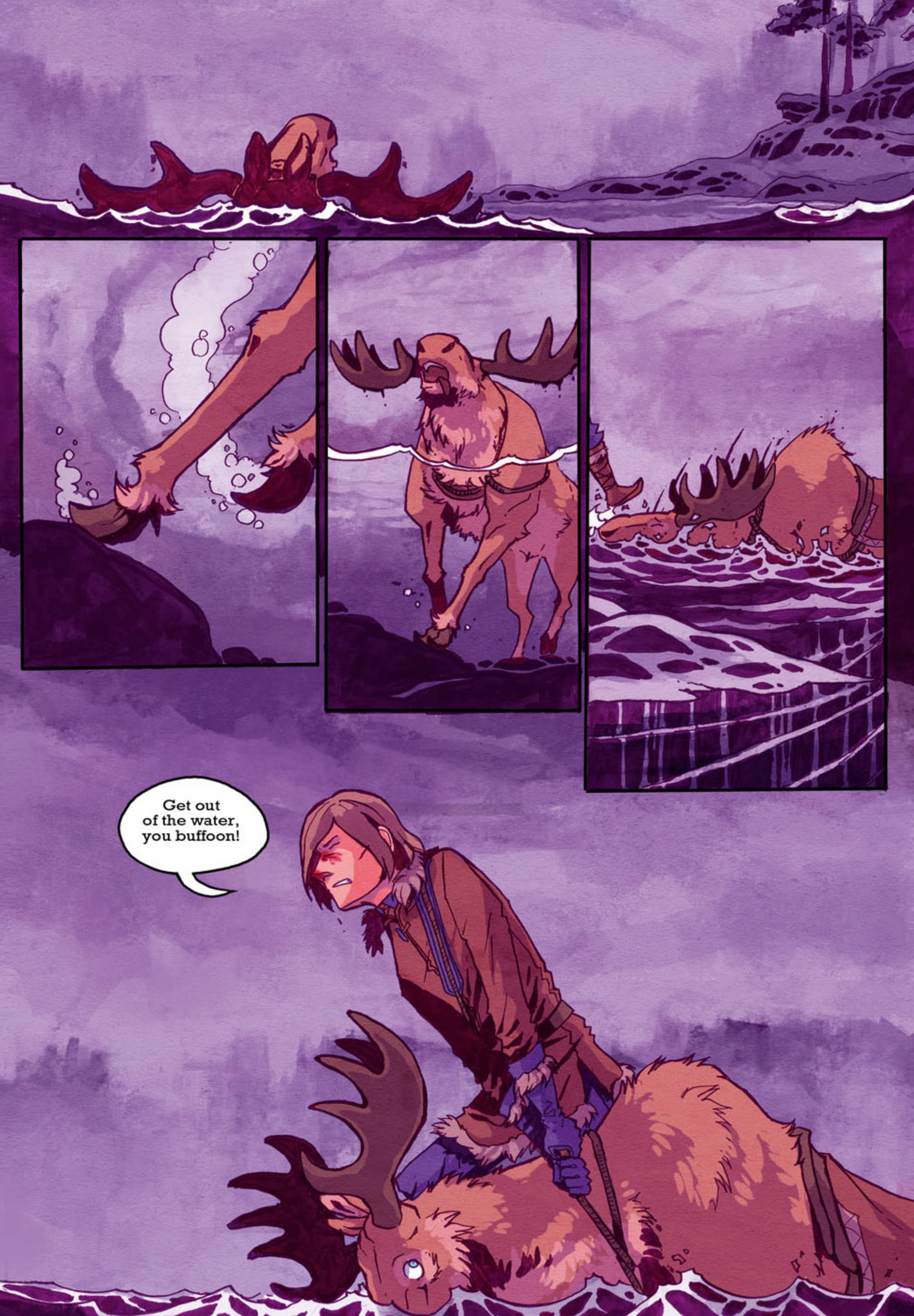


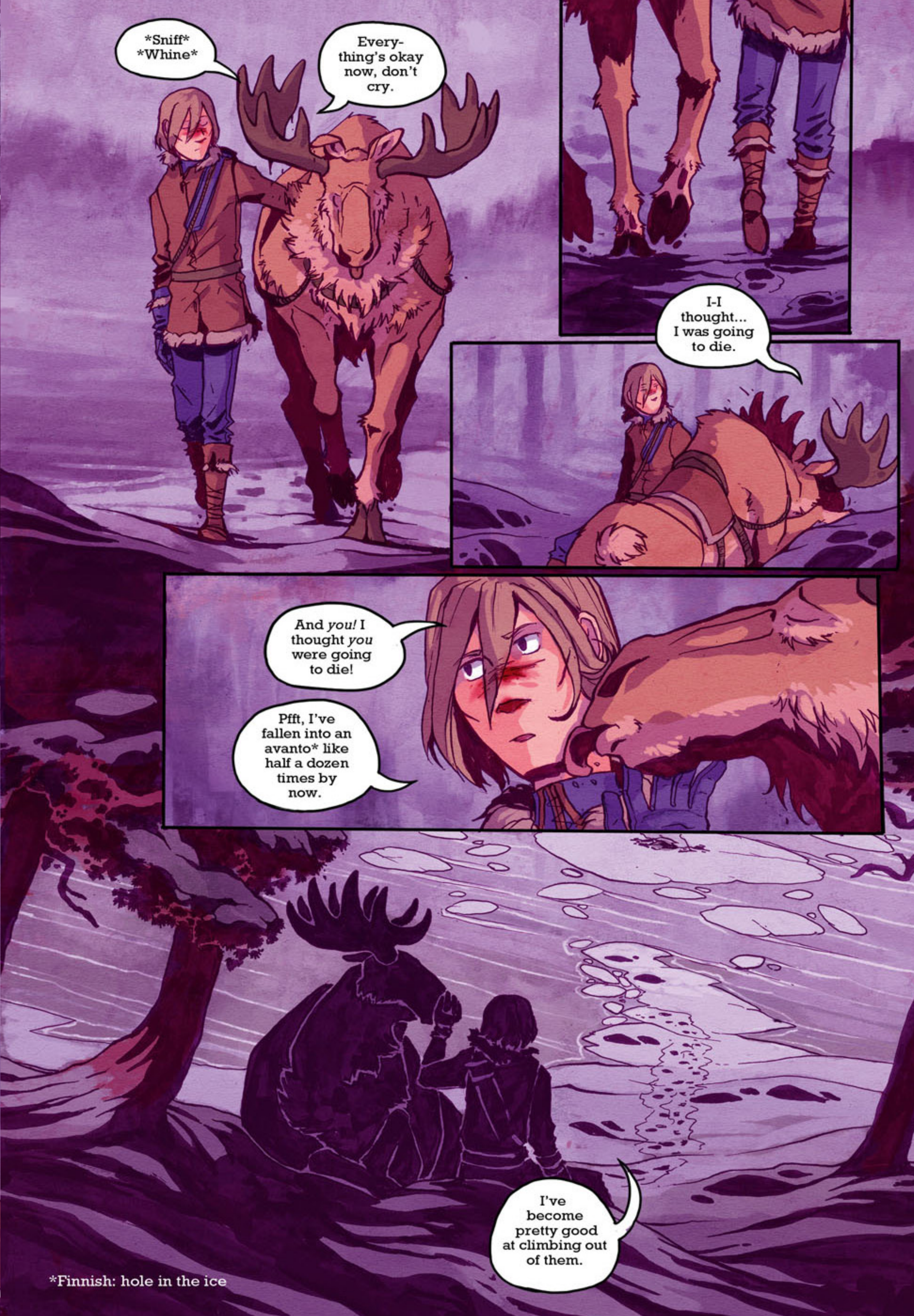

?
¡TSAK!


RH!

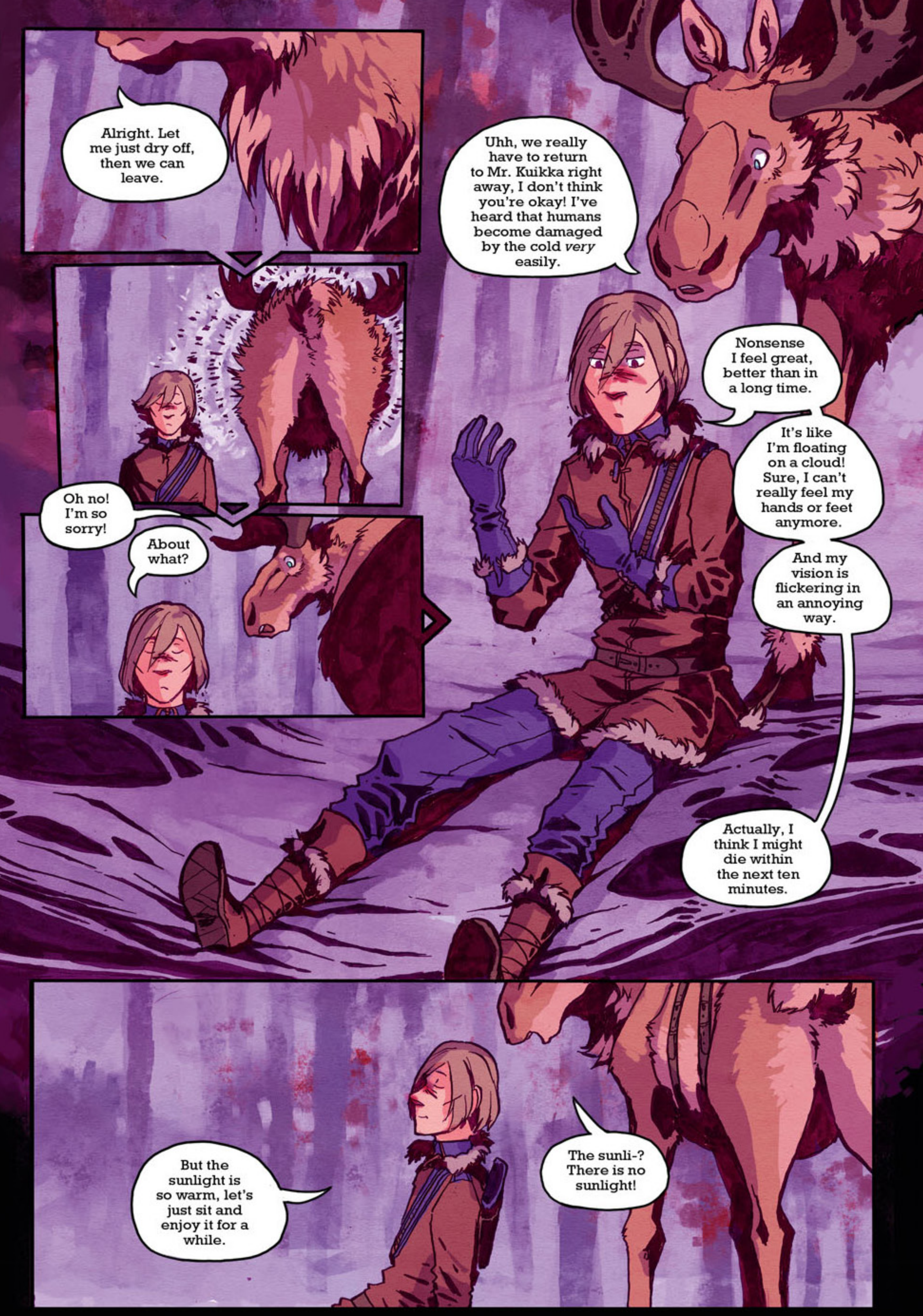


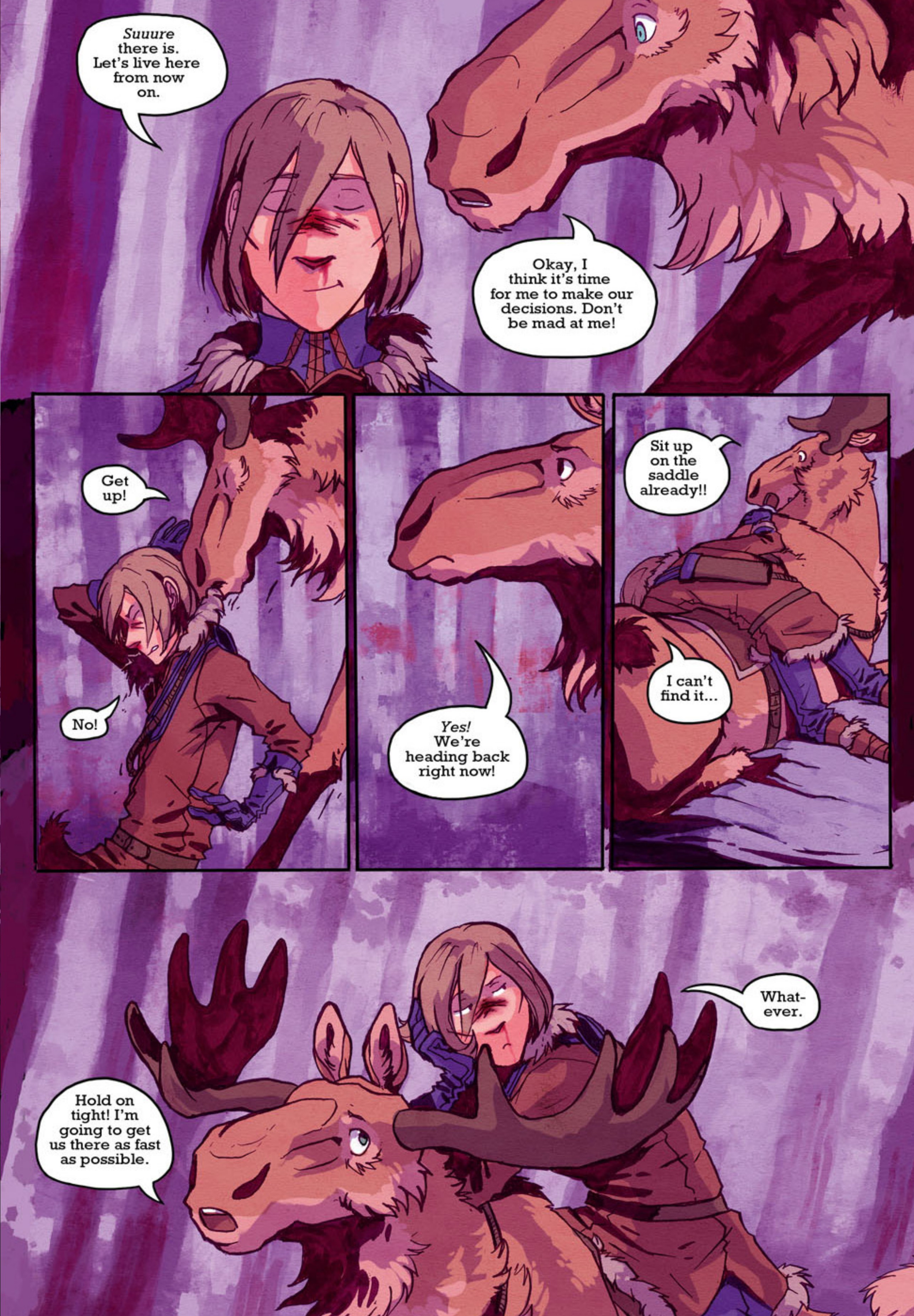

Gasp!

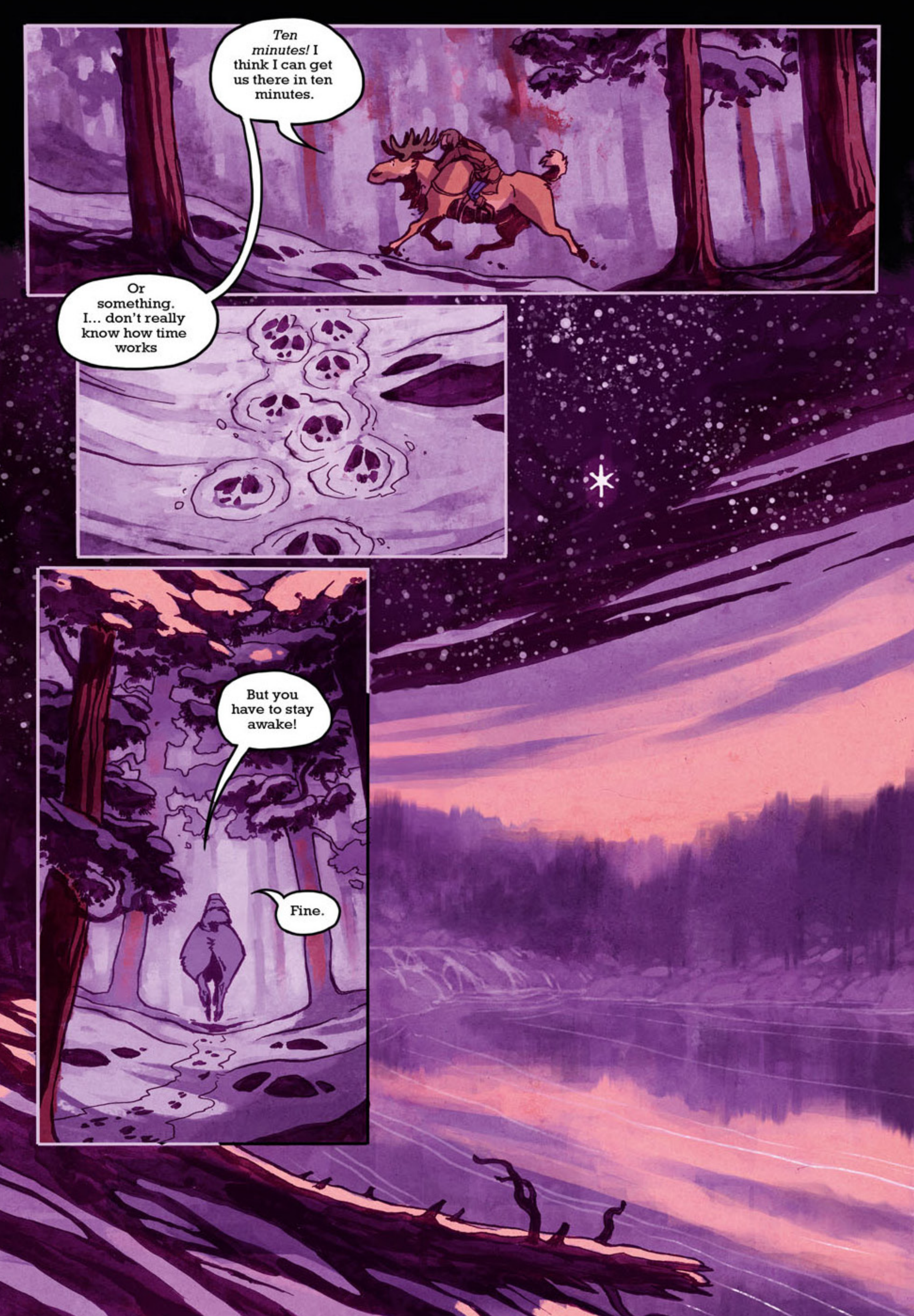

Get out of the water, you buffoon!

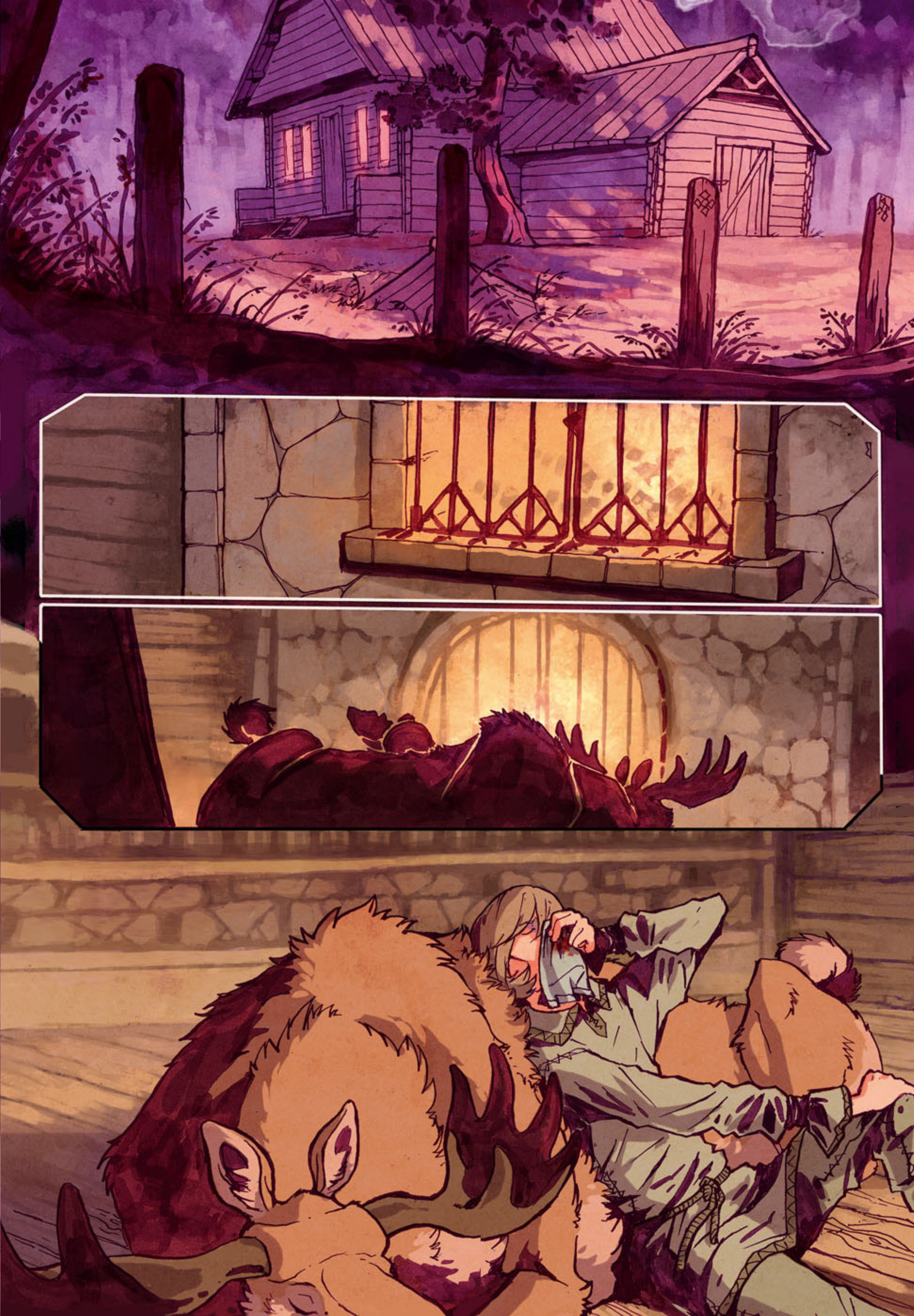

Sniff *Whine*
Every-thing's okay now, don't cry.
I-I thought... I was going to die.
And *you!* I thought *you* were going to die!
Pfft, I've fallen into an avanto* like half a dozen times by now.
I've become pretty good at climbing out of them.

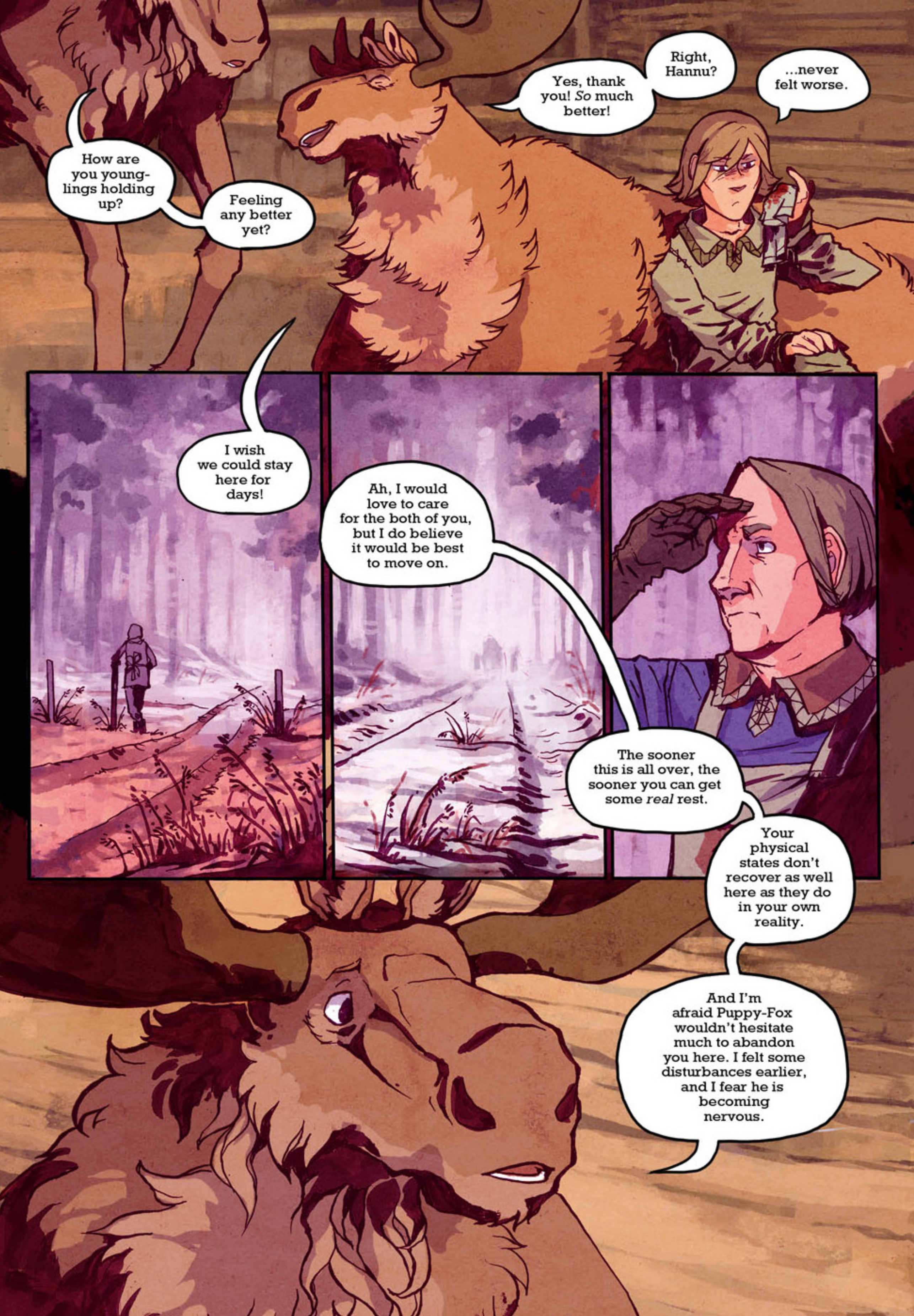
*Finnish: hole in the ice

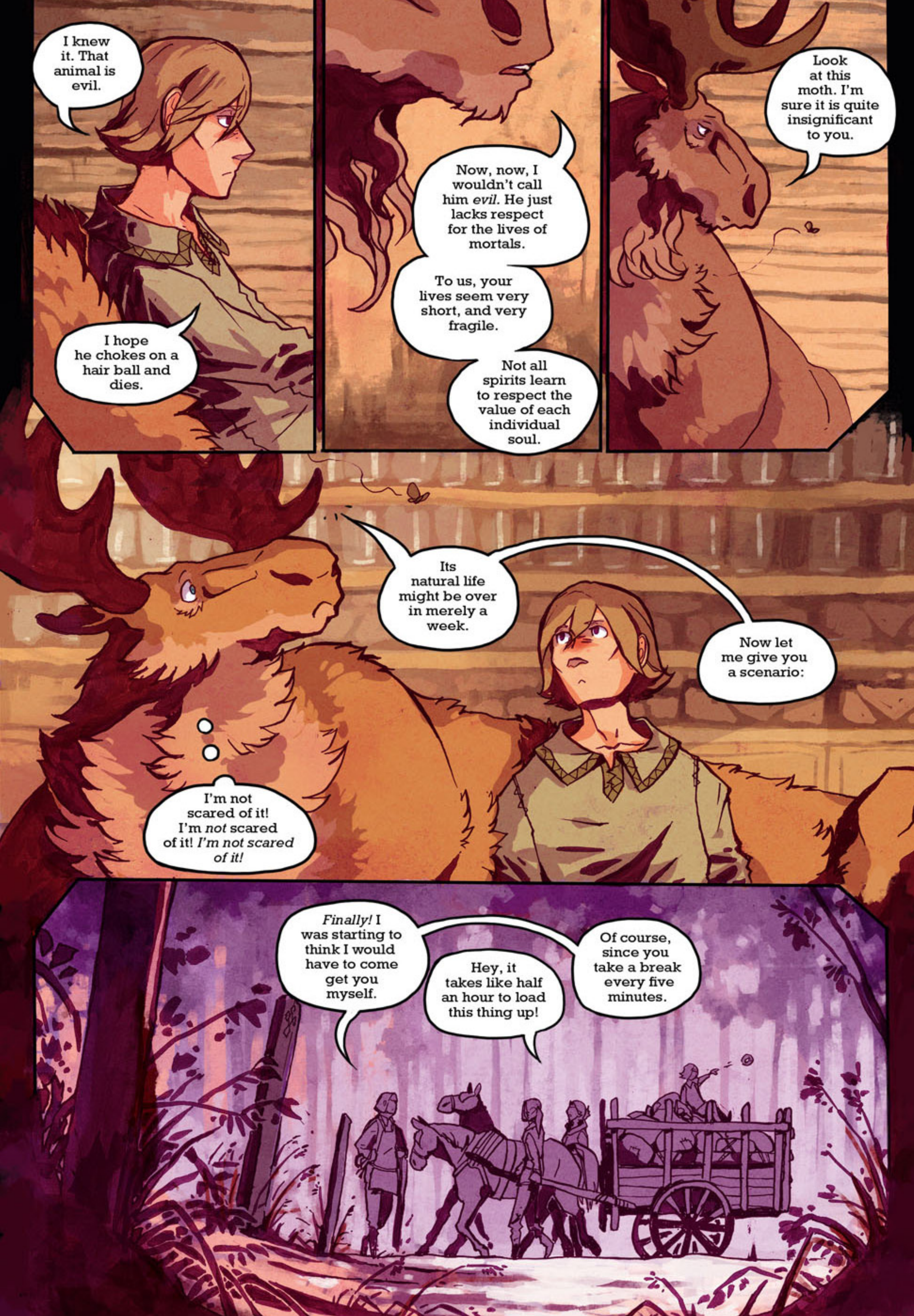

Alright. Let me just dry off, then we can leave.
Oh no! I'm so sorry!
About what?
Uhh, we really have to return to Mr. Kuikka right away, I don't think you're okay! I've heard that humans become damaged by the cold *very* easily.
Nonsense I feel great, better than in a long time.
It's like I'm floating on a cloud! Sure, I can't really feel my hands or feet anymore.
And my vision is flickering in an annoying way.
Actually, I think I might die within the next ten minutes.
But the sunlight is so warm, let's just sit and enjoy it for a while.
The sunli-? There is no sunlight!

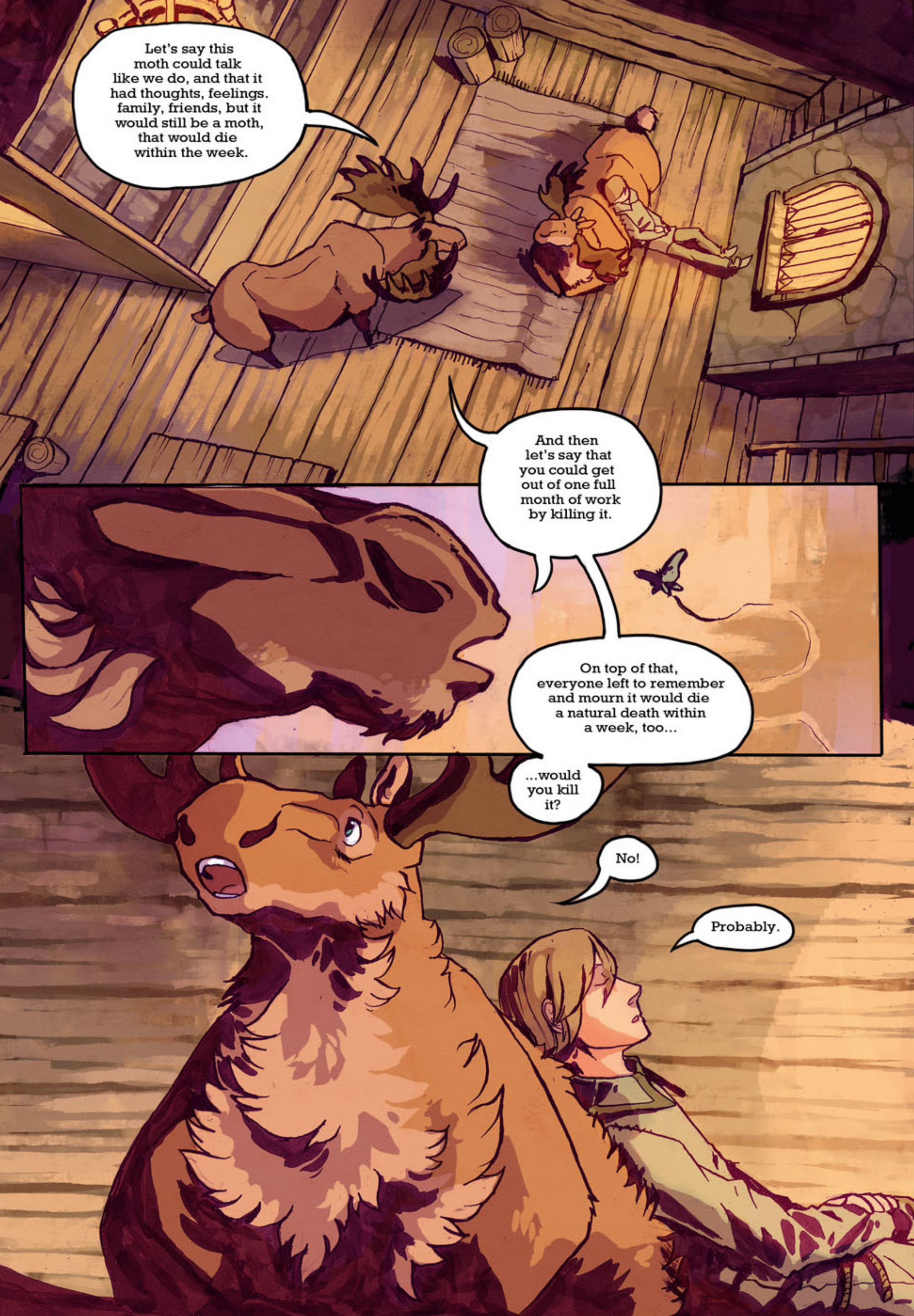

Suuure there is. Let's live here from now on.
Okay, I think it's time for me to make our decisions. Don't be mad at me!
Get up!
No!
Yes! We're heading back right now!
Sit up on the saddle already!!
I can't find it...
What-ever.
Hold on tight! I'm going to get us there as fast as possible.

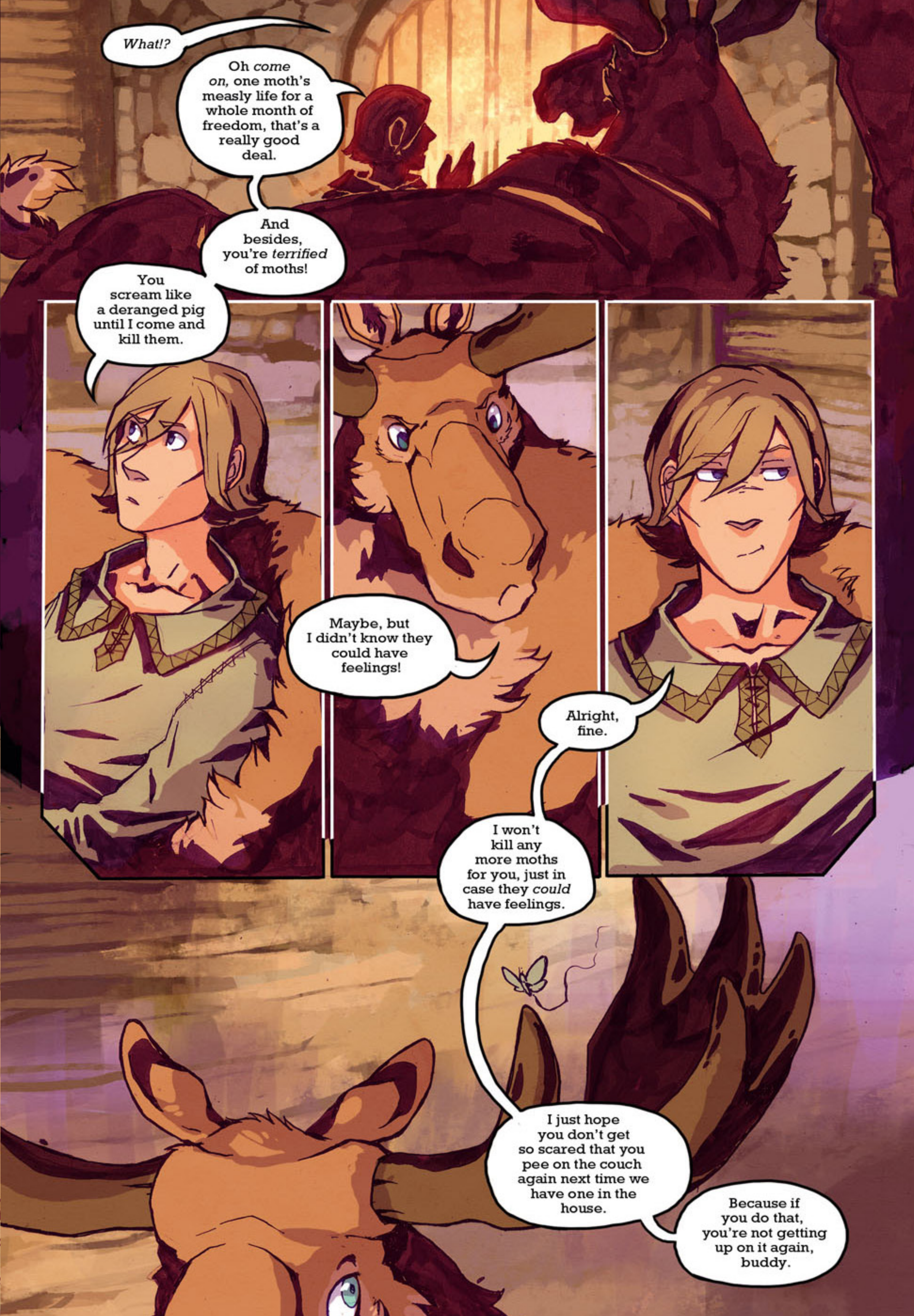

Ten minutes! I think I can get us there in ten minutes.
Or something. I… don't really know how time works
But you have to stay awake!
Fine.

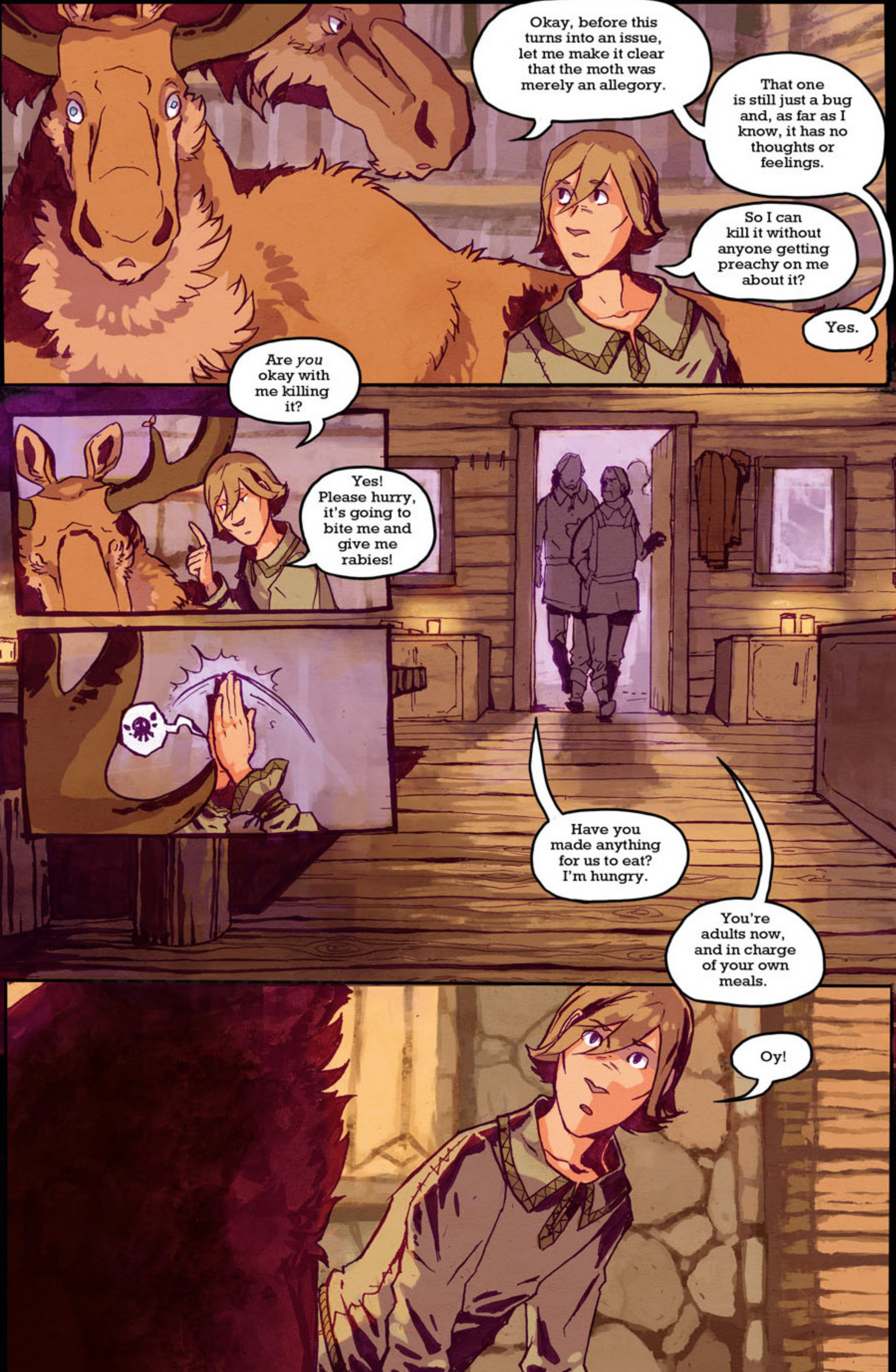


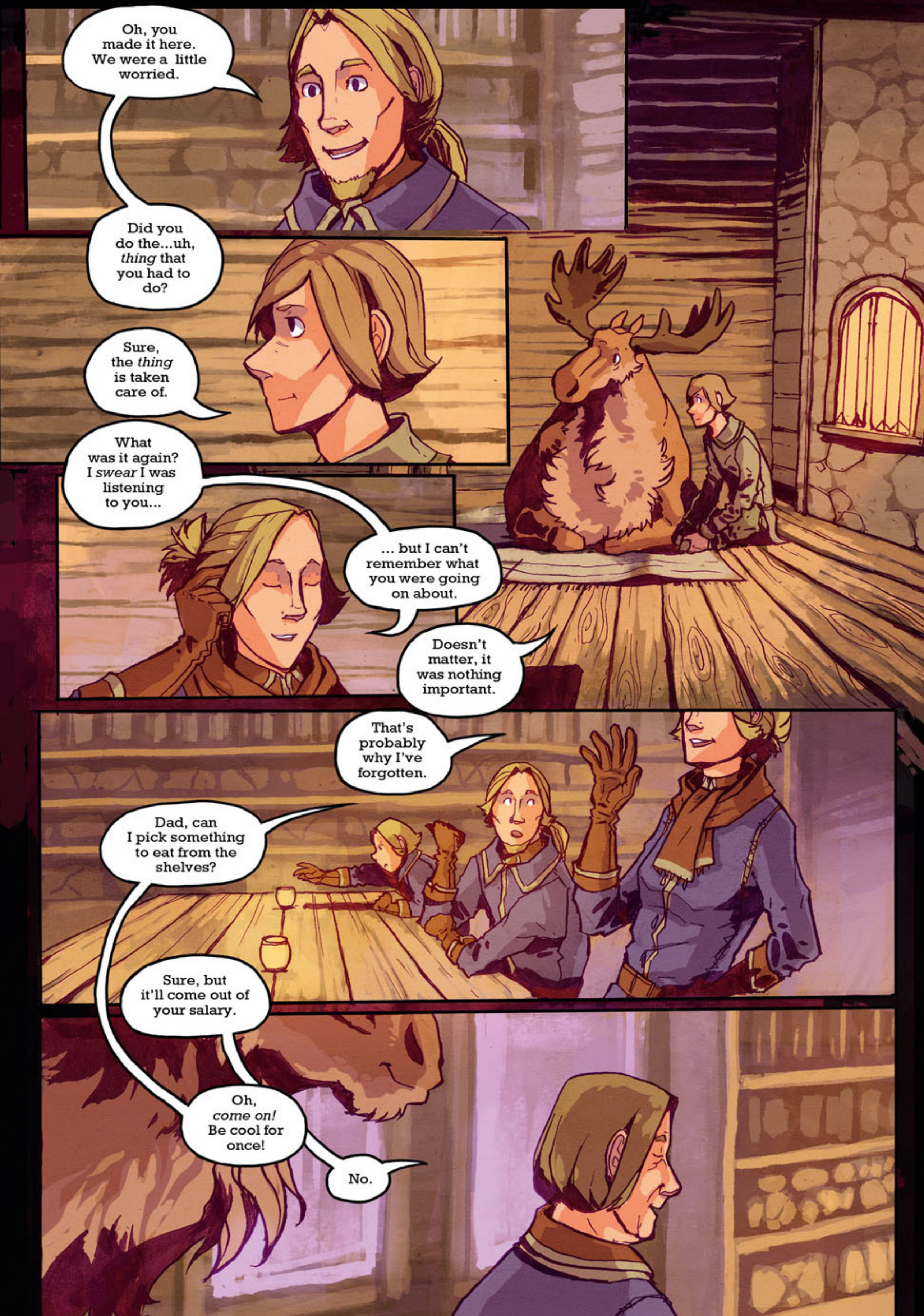

How are you younglings holding up?
Feeling any better yet?
Yes, thank you! *So* much better!
Right, Hannu?
...never felt worse.
I wish we could stay here for days!
Ah, I would love to care for the both of you, but I do believe it would be best to move on.
The sooner this is all over, the sooner you can get some *real* rest.
Your physical states don't recover as well here as they do in your own reality.
And I'm afraid Puppy-Fox wouldn't hesitate much to abandon you here. I felt some disturbances earlier, and I fear he is becoming nervous.

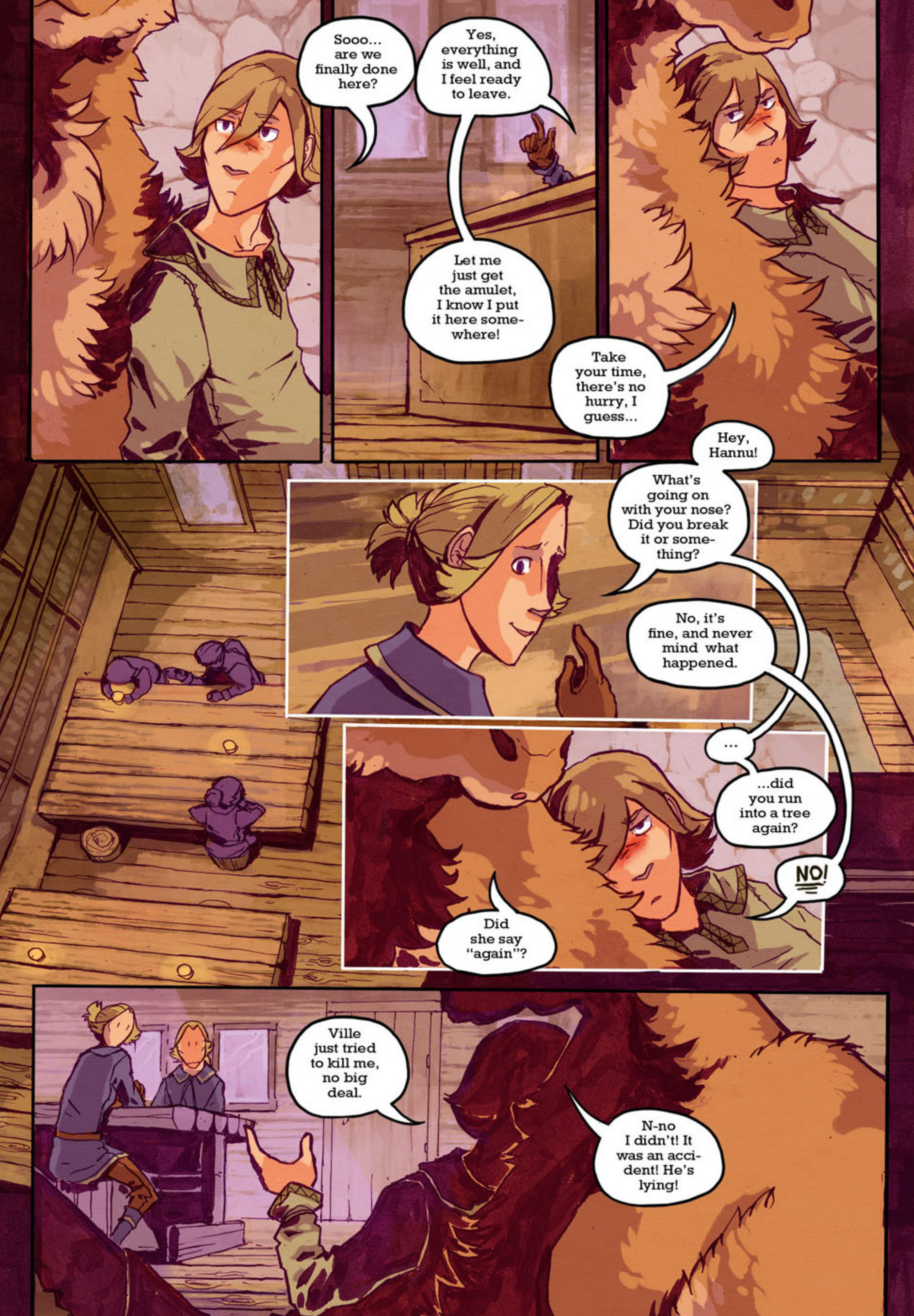

I knew it. That animal is evil.
I hope he chokes on a hair ball and dies.
Now, now, I wouldn't call him *evil*. He just lacks respect for the lives of mortals.
To us, your lives seem very short, and very fragile.
Not all spirits learn to respect the value of each individual soul.
Look at this moth. I'm sure it is quite insignificant to you.
Its natural life might be over in merely a week.
Now let me give you a scenario:
I'm not scared of it! I'm *not* scared of it! *I'm not scared of it!*
Finally! I was starting to think I would have to come get you myself.
Hey, it takes like half an hour to load this thing up!
Of course, since you take a break every five minutes.

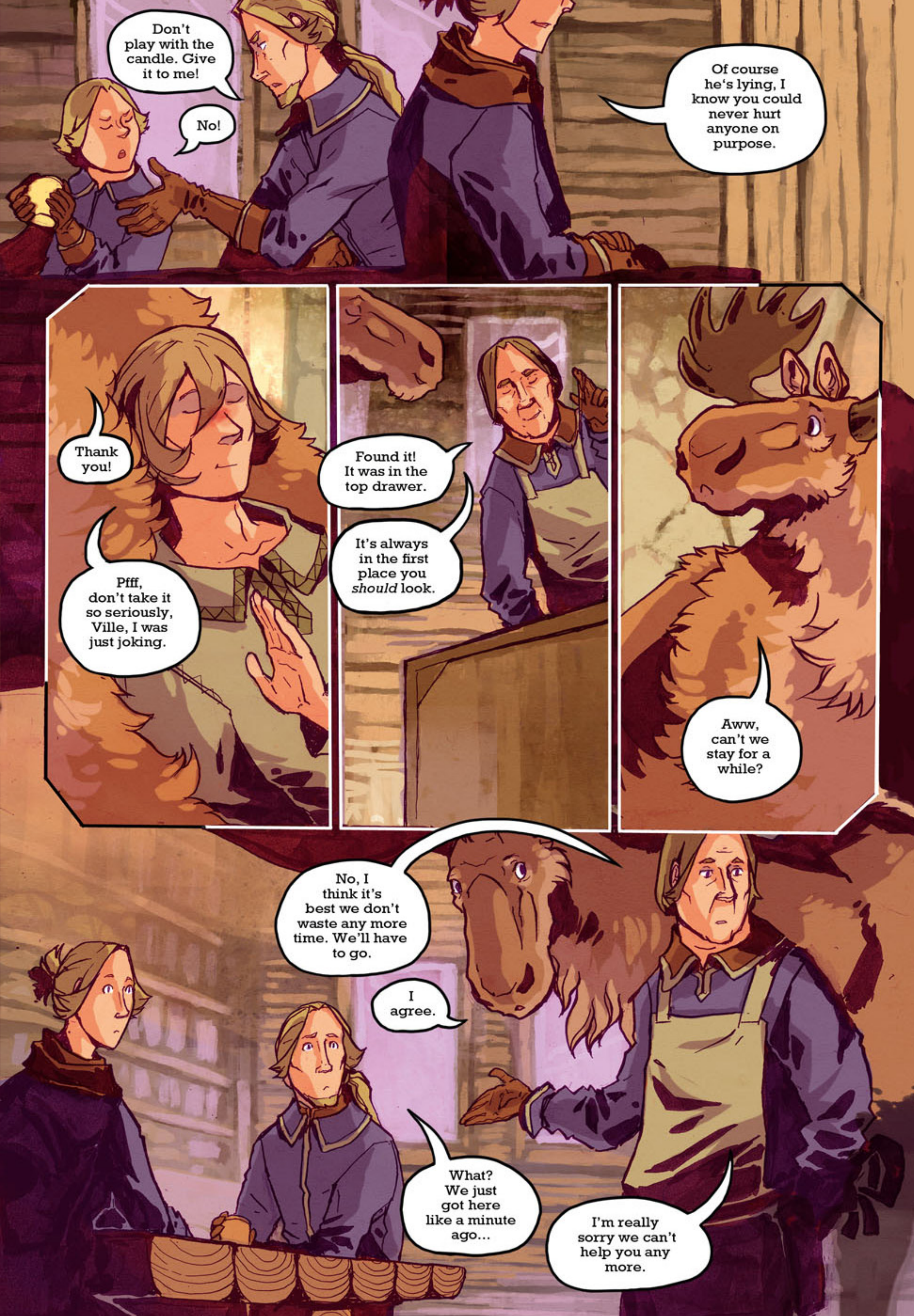

Let's say this moth could talk like we do, and that it had thoughts, feelings. family, friends, but it would still be a moth, that would die within the week.
And then let's say that you could get out of one full month of work by killing it.
On top of that, everyone left to remember and mourn it would die a natural death within a week, too...
...would you kill it?
No!
Probably.

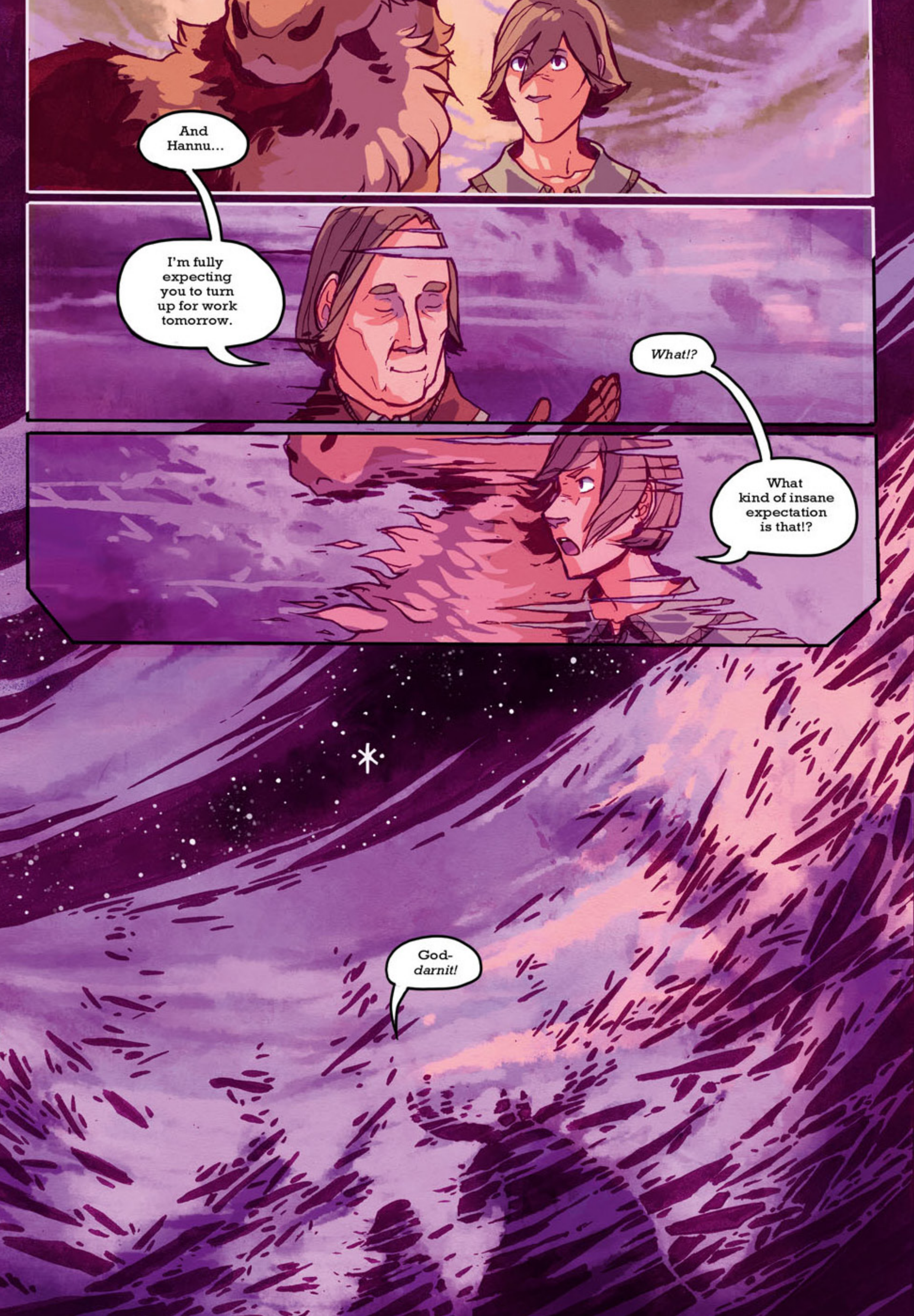

What!?
Oh *come on,* one moth's measly life for a whole month of freedom, that's a really good deal.
And besides, you're *terrified* of moths!
You scream like a deranged pig until I come and kill them.
Maybe, but I didn't know they could have feelings!
Alright, fine.
I won't kill any more moths for you, just in case they *could* have feelings.
I just hope you don't get so scared that you pee on the couch again next time we have one in the house.
Because if you do that, you're not getting up on it again, buddy.

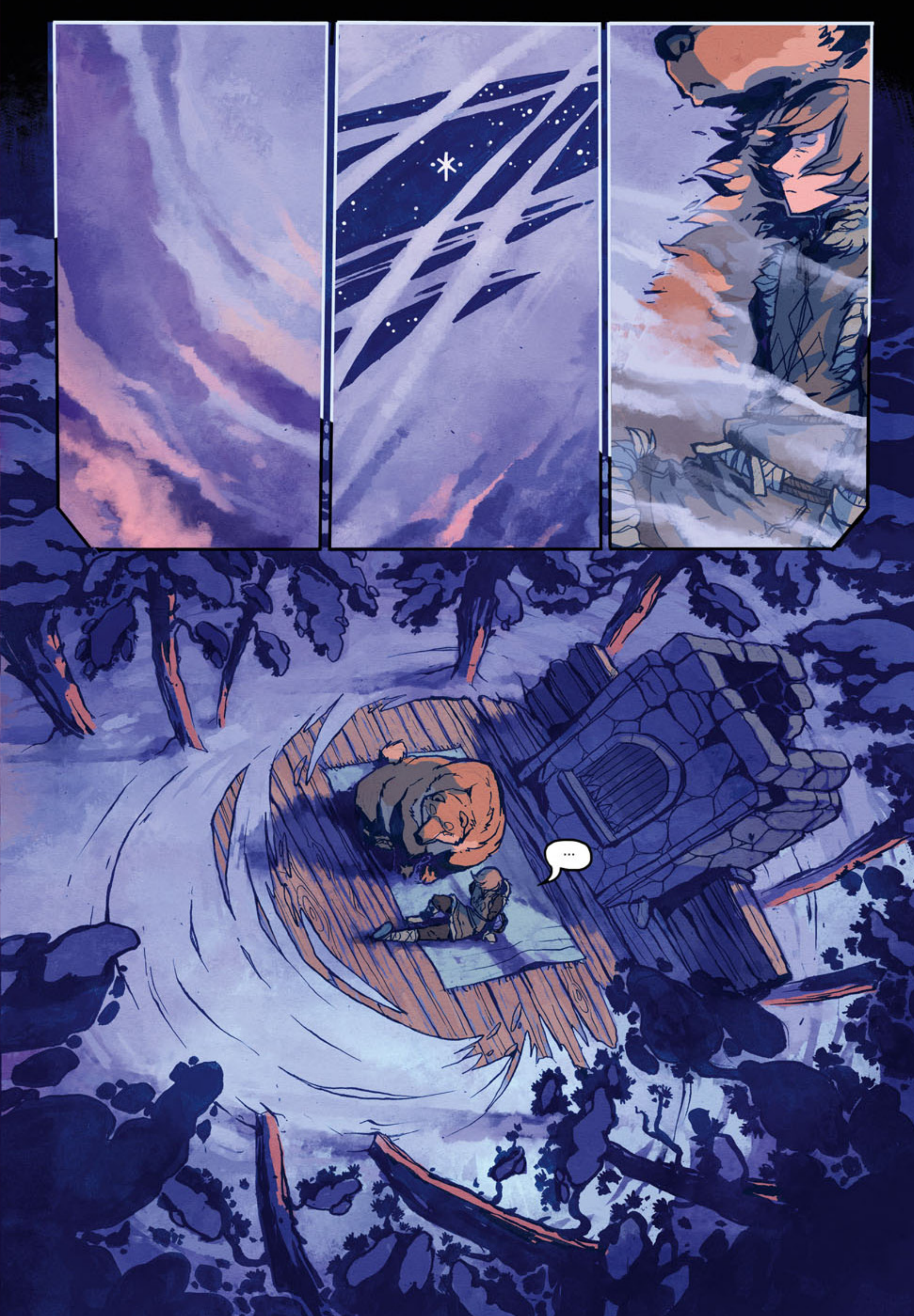

Okay, before this turns into an issue, let me make it clear that the moth was merely an allegory.
That one is still just a bug and, as far as I know, it has no thoughts or feelings.
So I can kill it without anyone getting preachy on me about it?
Yes.
Are *you* okay with me killing it?
Yes! Please hurry, it's going to bite me and give me rabies!
Have you made anything for us to eat? I'm hungry.
You're adults now, and in charge of your own meals.
Oy!


Oh, you made it here. We were a little worried.
Did you do the...uh, *thing* that you had to do?
Sure, the *thing* is taken care of.
What was it again? I *swear* I was listening to you...
... but I can't remember what you were going on about.
Doesn't matter, it was nothing important.
That's probably why I've forgotten.
Dad, can I pick something to eat from the shelves?
Sure, but it'll come out of your salary.
Oh, *come on!* Be cool for once!
No.

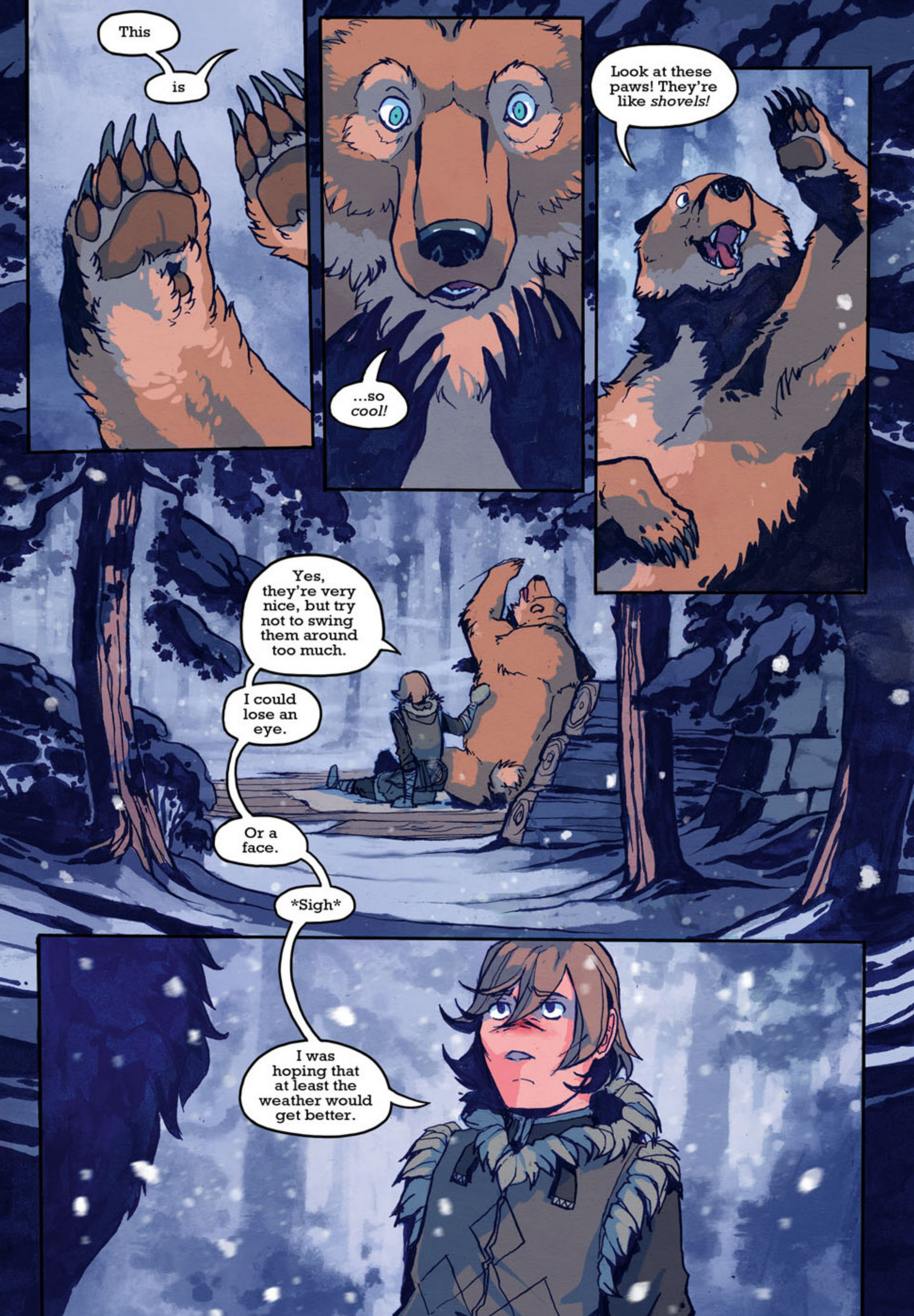

Sooo... are we finally done here?
Yes, everything is well, and I feel ready to leave.
Let me just get the amulet, I know I put it here somewhere!
Take your time, there's no hurry, I guess...
Hey, Hannu!
What's going on with your nose? Did you break it or something?
No, it's fine, and never mind what happened.
...
...did you run into a tree again?
NO!
Did she say "again"?
Ville just tried to kill me, no big deal.
N-no I didn't! It was an accident! He's lying!

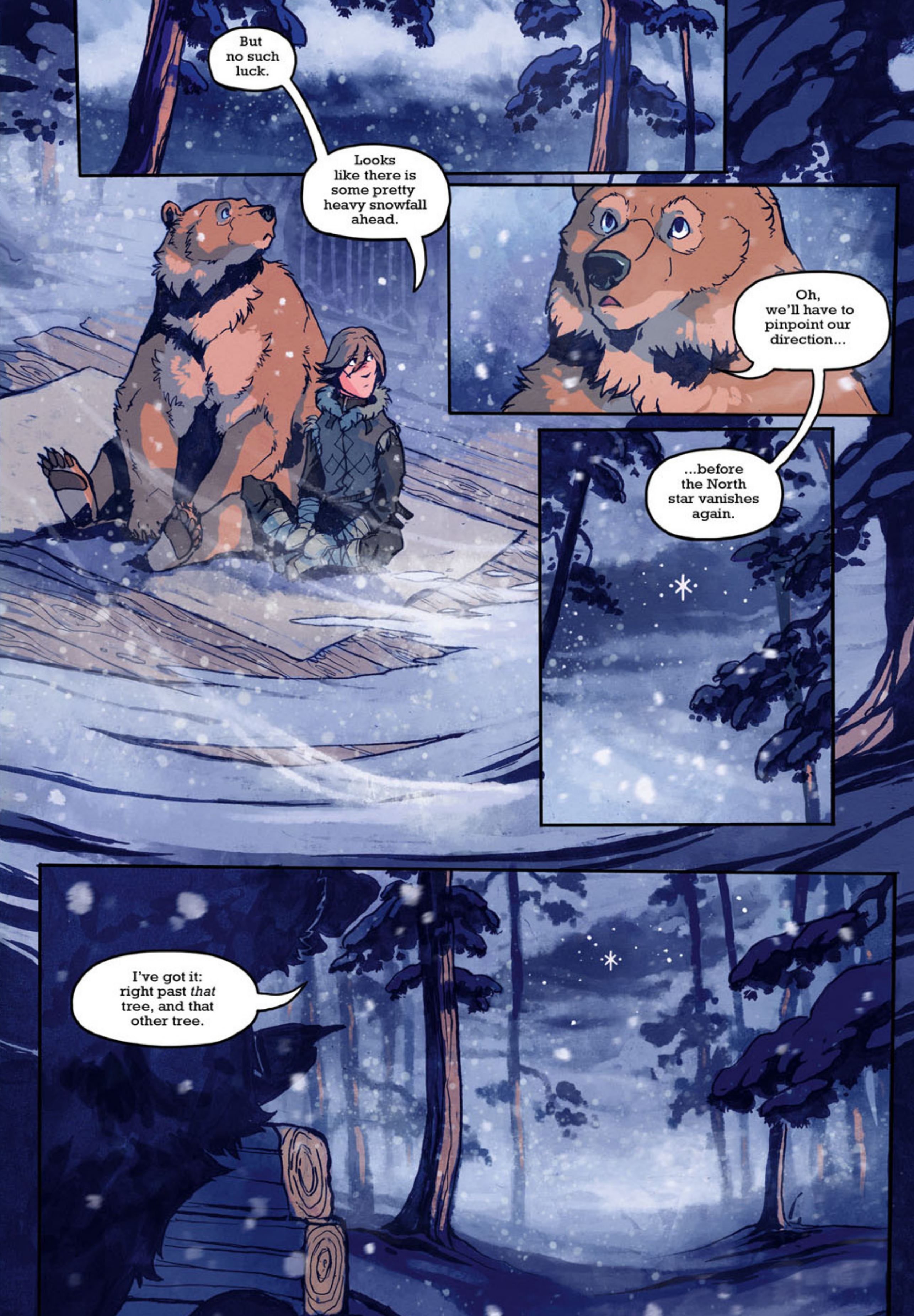

Don't play with the candle. Give it to me!
No!
Of course he's lying, I know you could never hurt anyone on purpose.
Thank you!
Pfff, don't take it so seriously, Ville, I was just joking.
Found it! It was in the top drawer.
It's always in the first place you *should* look.
Aww, can't we stay for a while?
No, I think it's best we don't waste any more time. We'll have to go.
I agree.
What? We just got here like a minute ago...
I'm really sorry we can't help you any more.

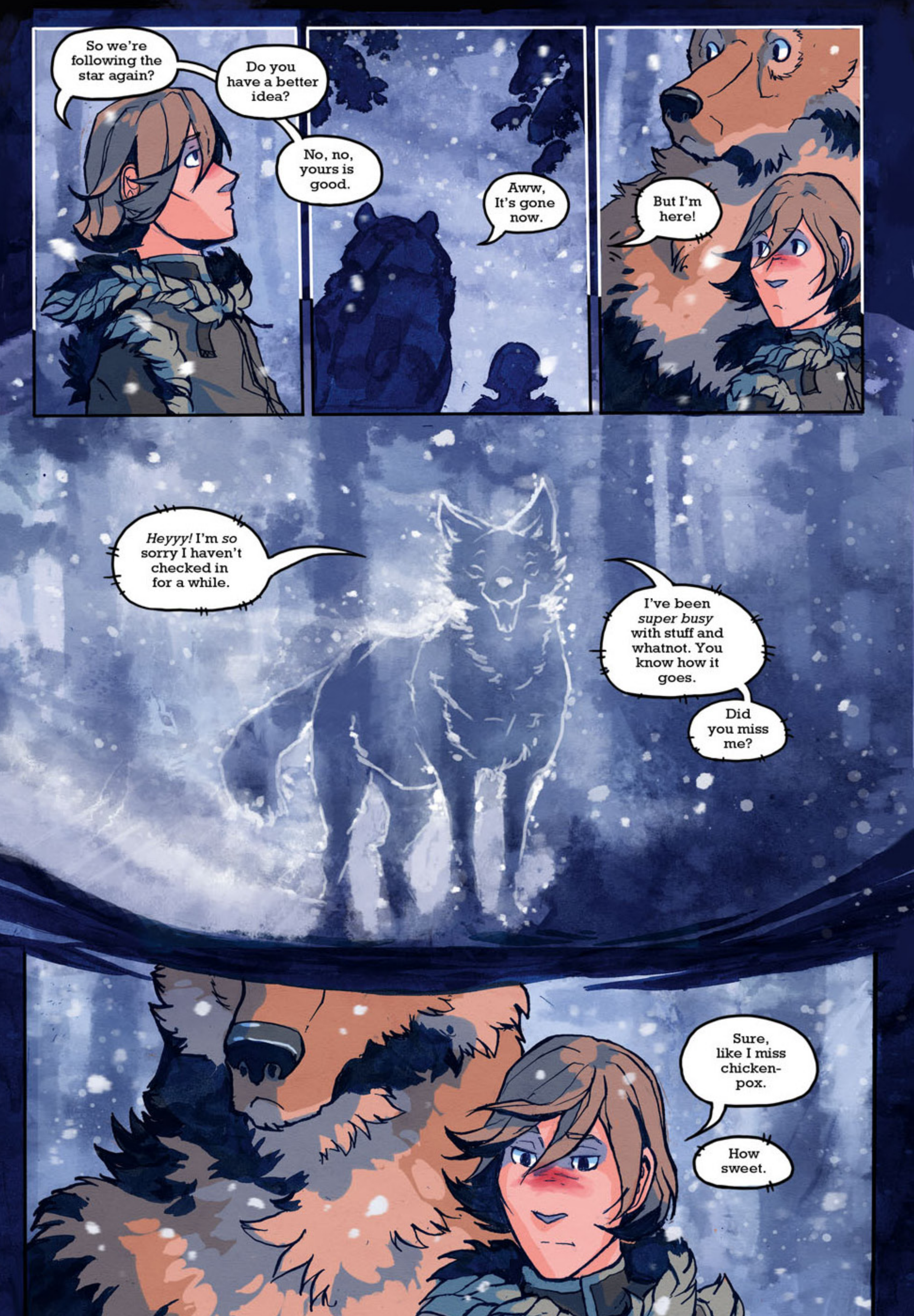

And Hannu...
I'm fully expecting you to turn up for work tomorrow.
What!?
What kind of insane expectation is that!?
God-*darnit!*

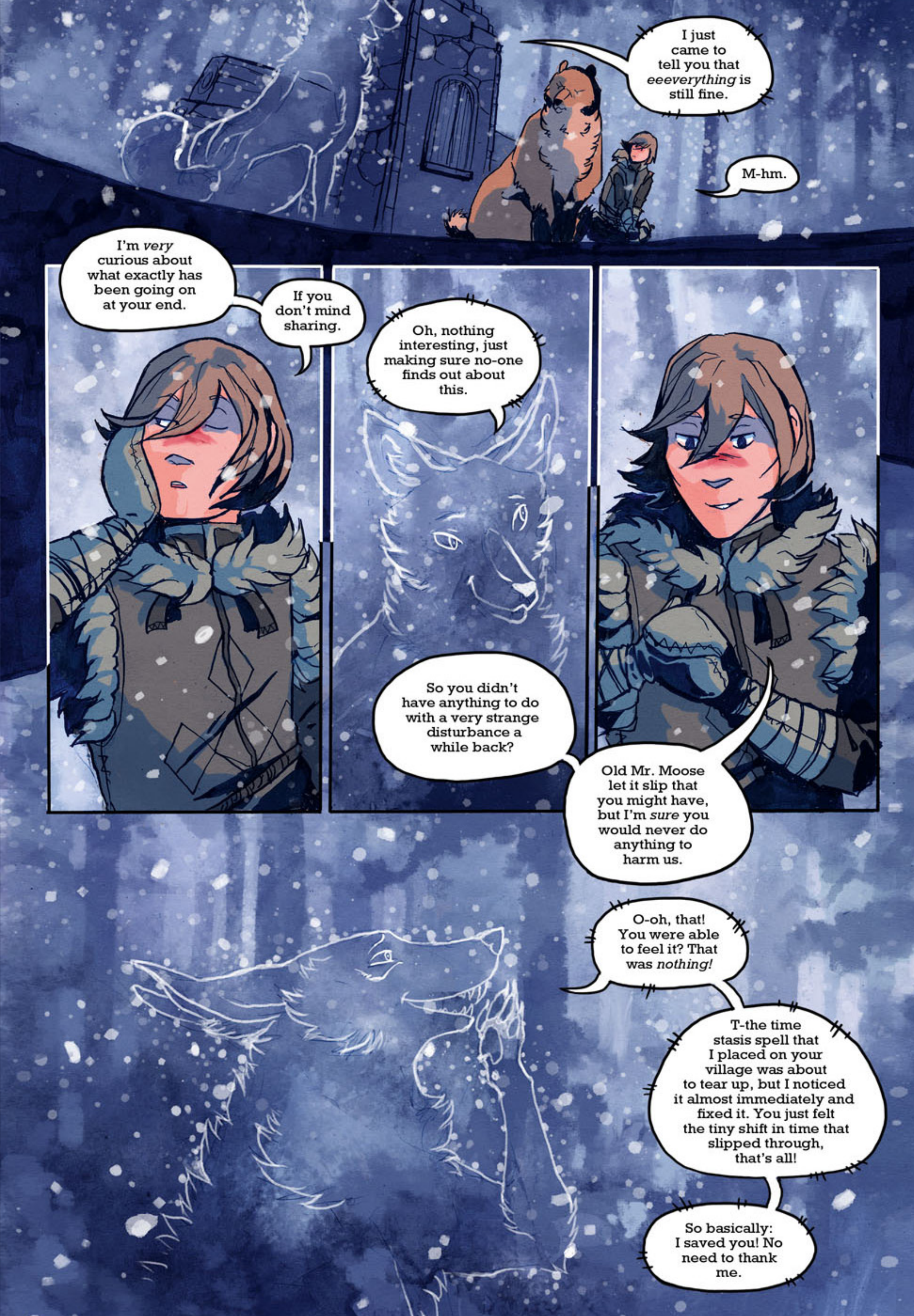


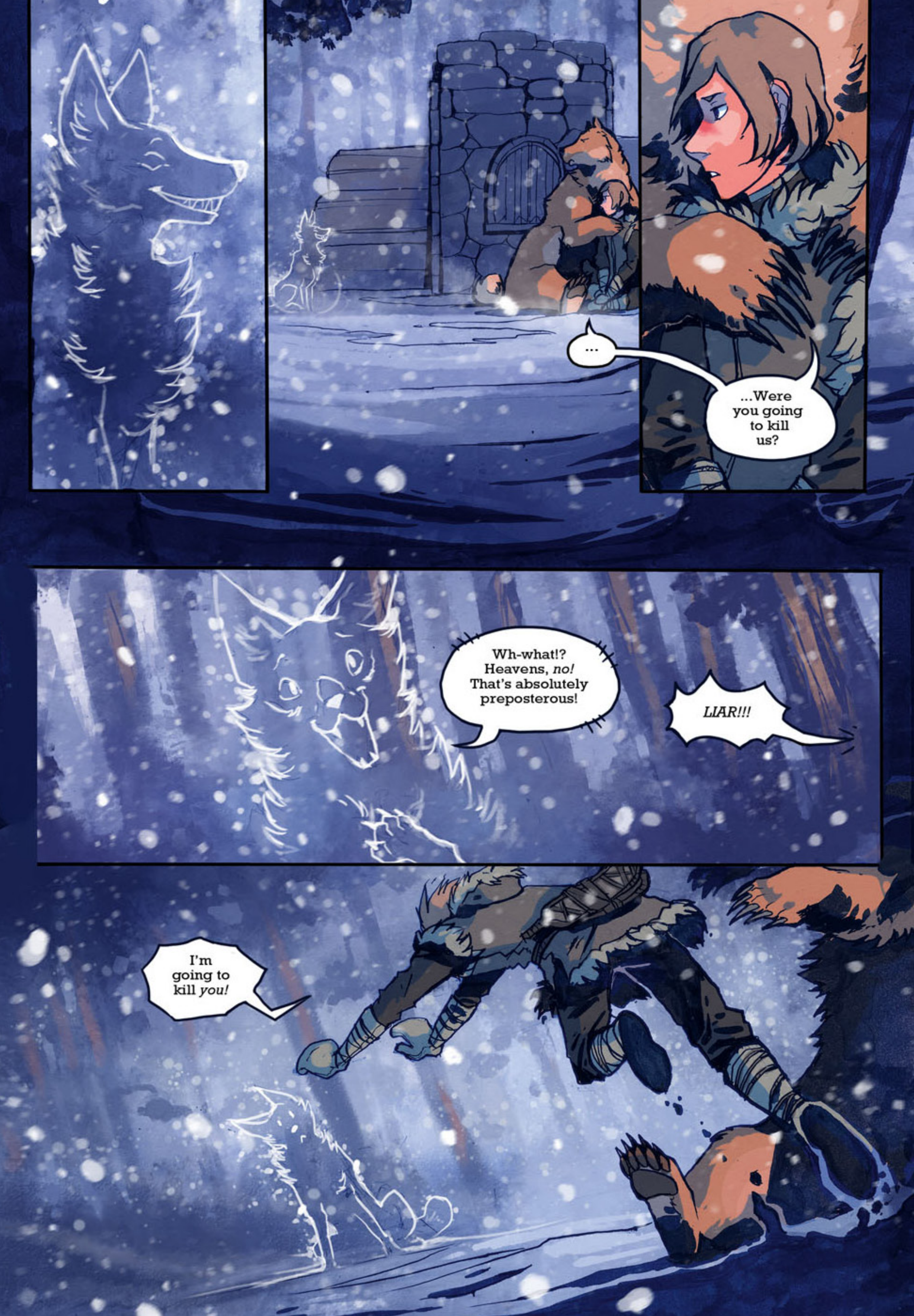
A Redtail's Dream

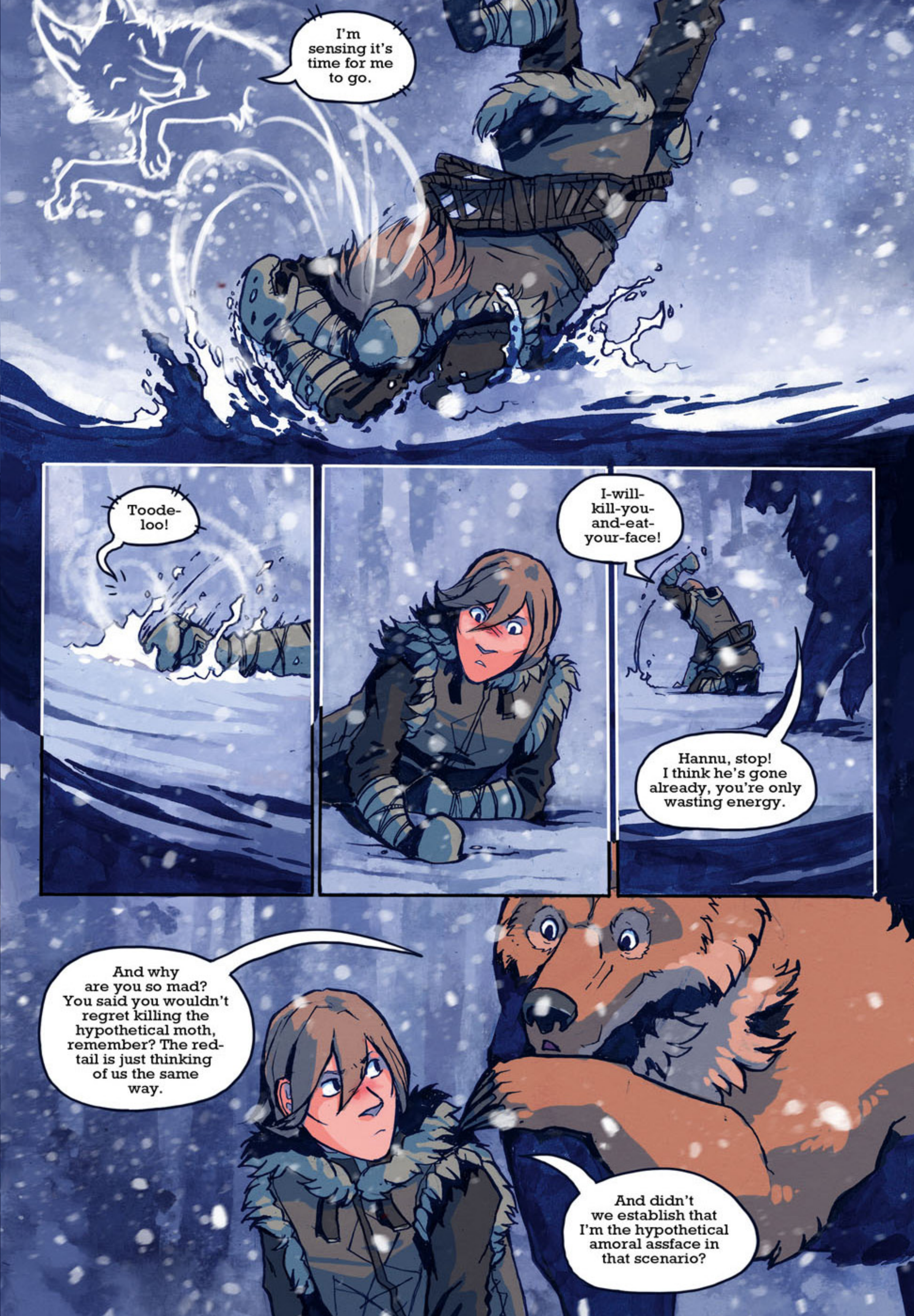

This
is
...so *cool!*
Look at these paws! They're like *shovels!*
Yes, they're very nice, but try not to swing them around too much.
I could lose an eye.
Or a face.
Sigh
I was hoping that at least the weather would get better.

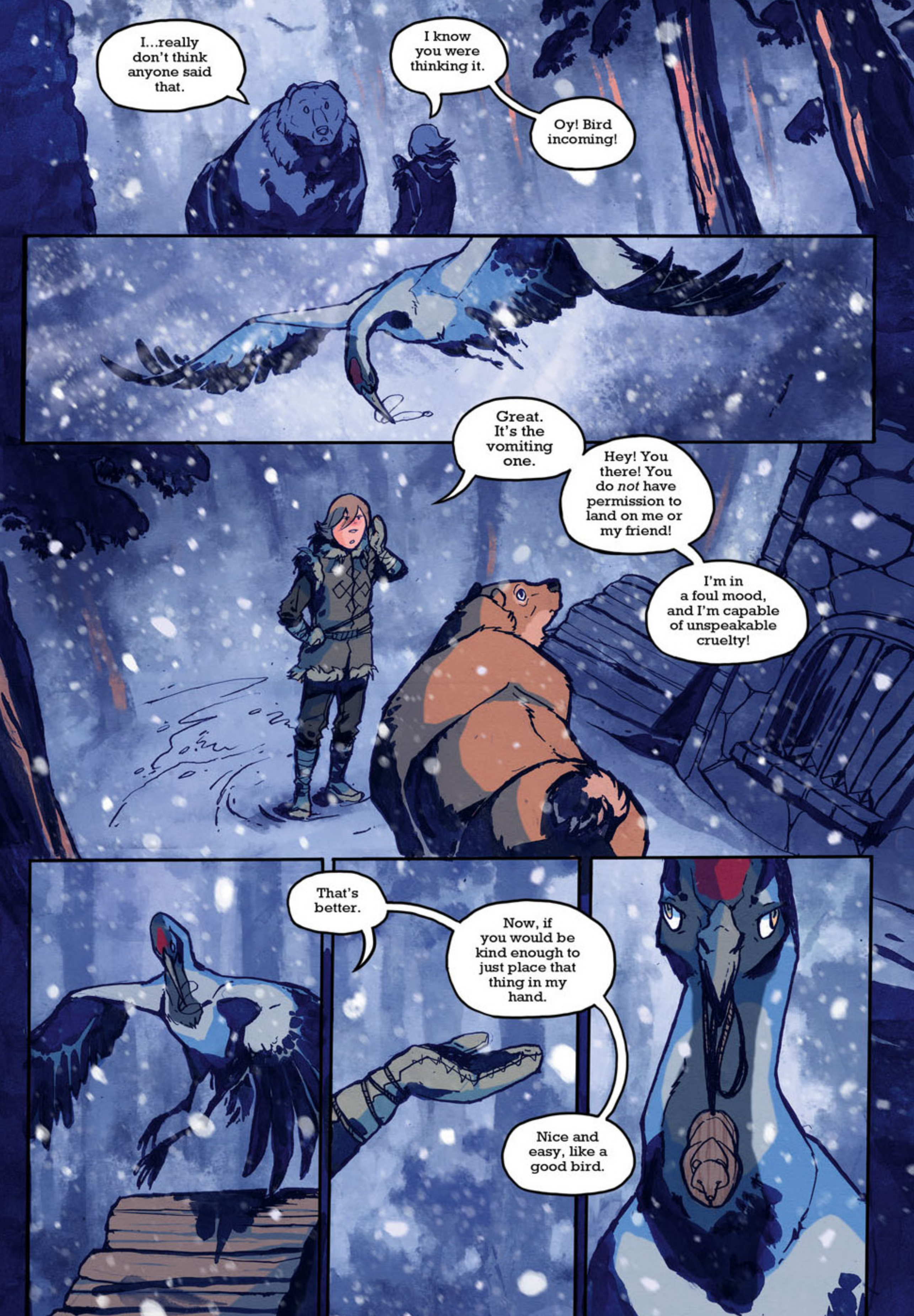

But no such luck.
Looks like there is some pretty heavy snowfall ahead.
Oh, we'll have to pinpoint our direction...
...before the North star vanishes again.
I've got it: right past *that* tree, and that other tree.

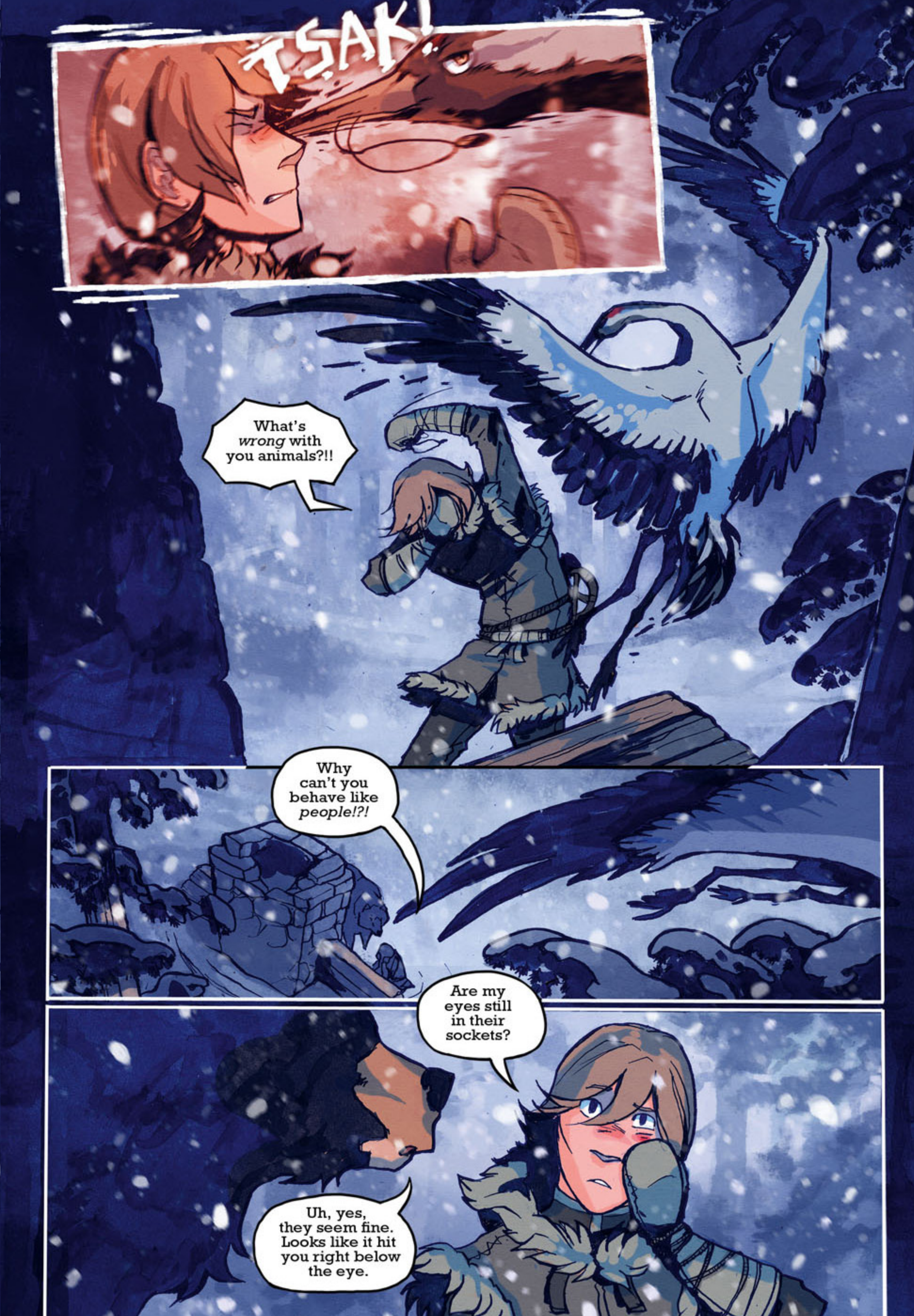

So we're following the star again?
Do you have a better idea?
No, no, yours is good.
Aww, It's gone now.
But I'm here!
Heyyy! I'm *so* sorry I haven't checked in for a while.
I've been *super busy* with stuff and whatnot. You know how it goes.
Did you miss me?
Sure, like I miss chicken-pox.
How sweet.

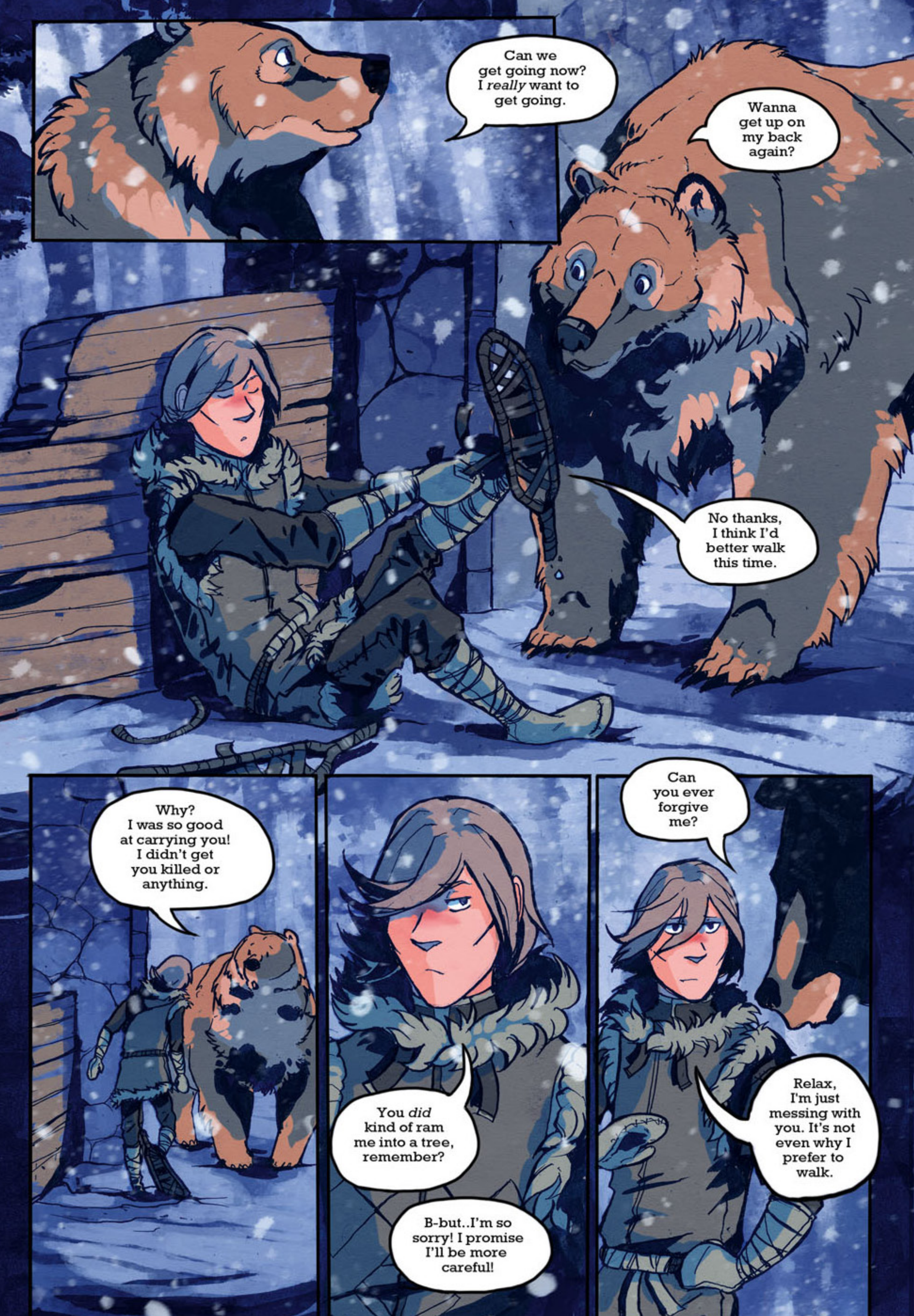

I just came to tell you that *eeeverything* is still fine.
M-hm.
I'm *very* curious about what exactly has been going on at your end.
If you don't mind sharing.
Oh, nothing interesting, just making sure no-one finds out about this.
So you didn't have anything to do with a very strange disturbance a while back?
Old Mr. Moose let it slip that you might have, but I'm *sure* you would never do anything to harm us.
O-oh, that! You were able to feel it? That was *nothing!*
T-the time stasis spell that I placed on your village was about to tear up, but I noticed it almost immediately and fixed it. You just felt the tiny shift in time that slipped through, that's all!
So basically: I saved you! No need to thank me.

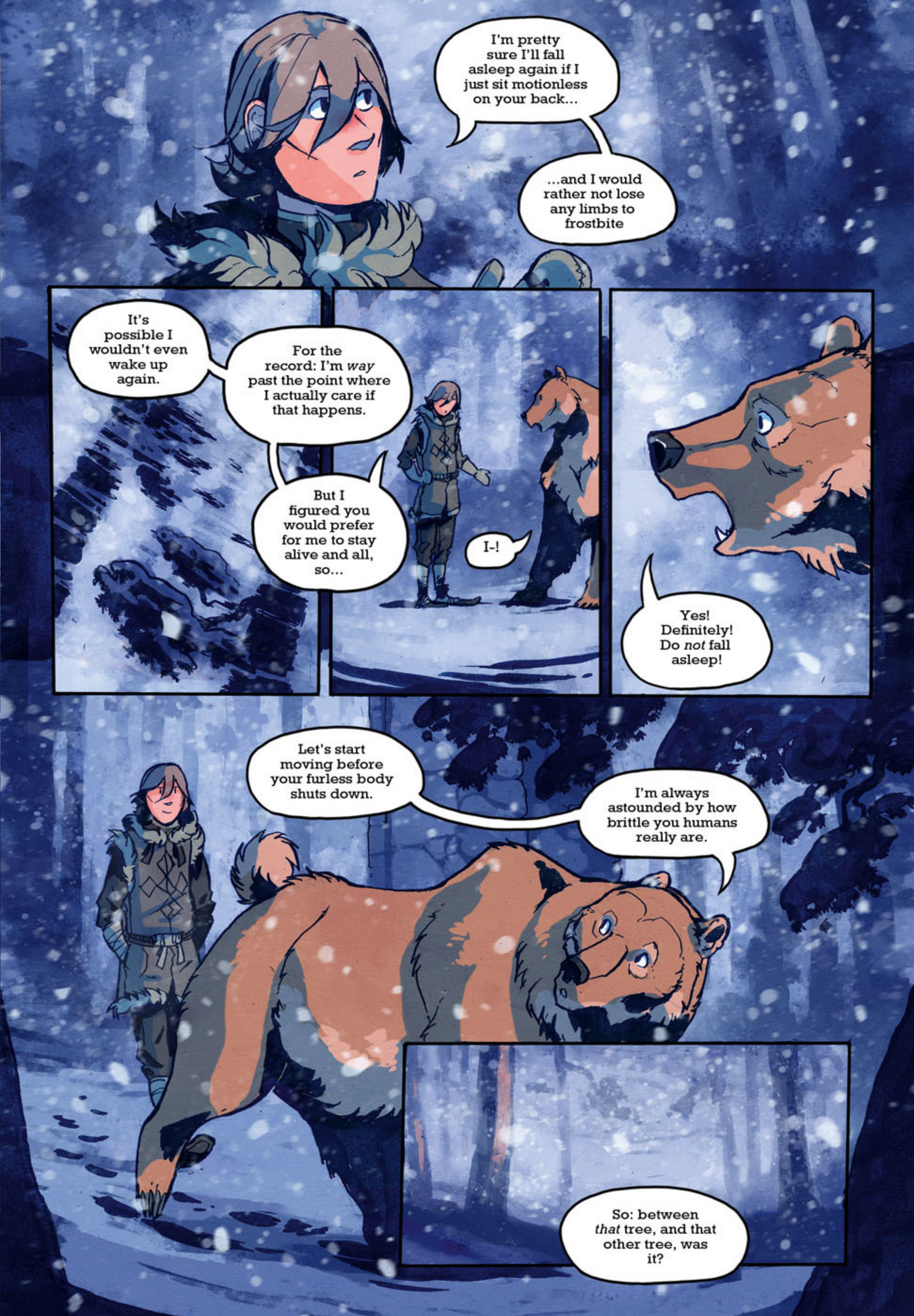

...
...Were you going to kill us?
Wh-what!? Heavens, *no!* That's absolutely preposterous!
LIAR!!!
I'm going to kill *you!*

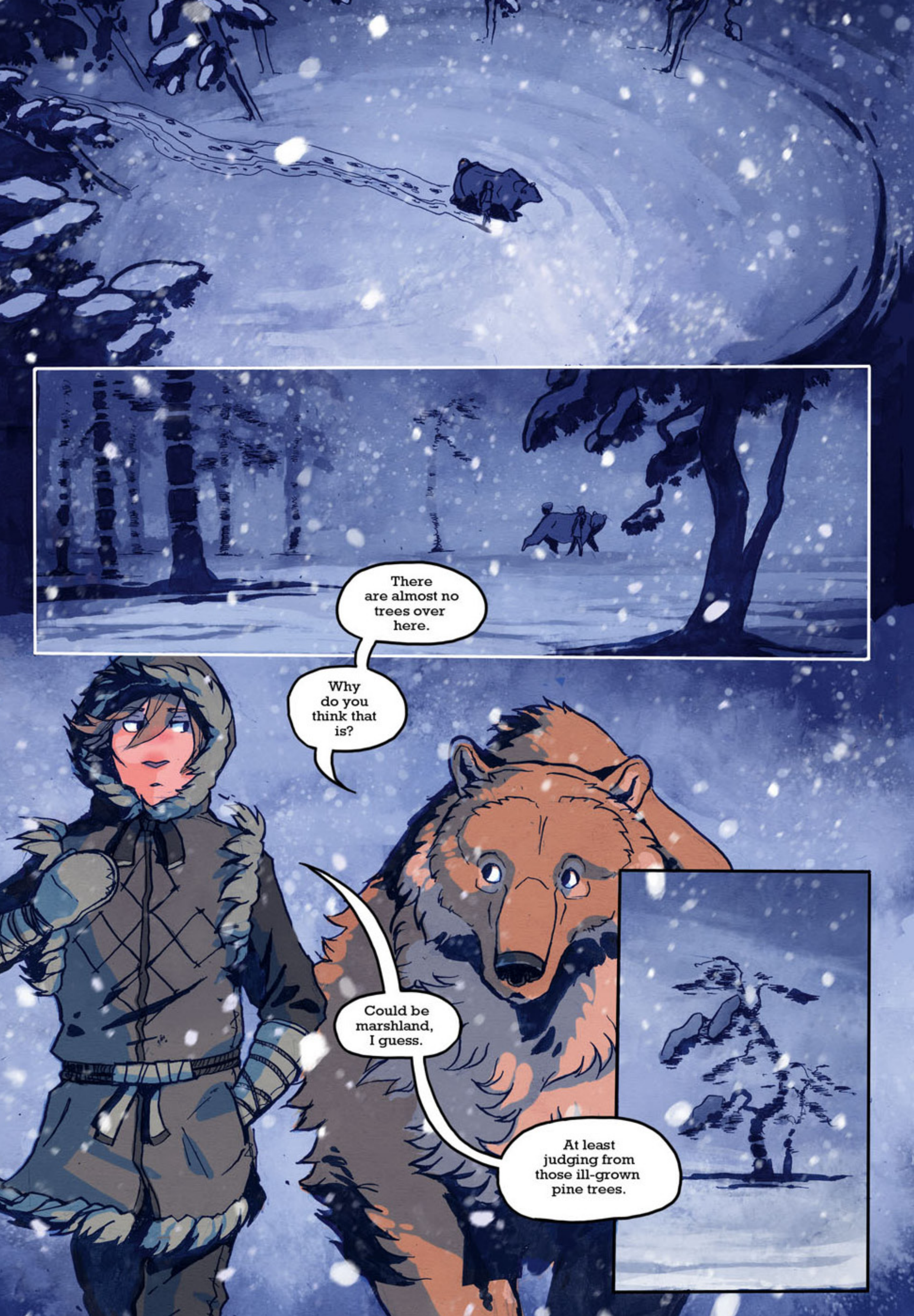

I'm sensing it's time for me to go.
Toodle-loo!
I-will-kill-you-and-eat-your-face!
Hannu, stop! I think he's gone already, you're only wasting energy.
And why are you so mad? You said you wouldn't regret killing the hypothetical moth, remember? The red-tail is just thinking of us the same way.
And didn't we establish that I'm the hypothetical amoral assface in that scenario?

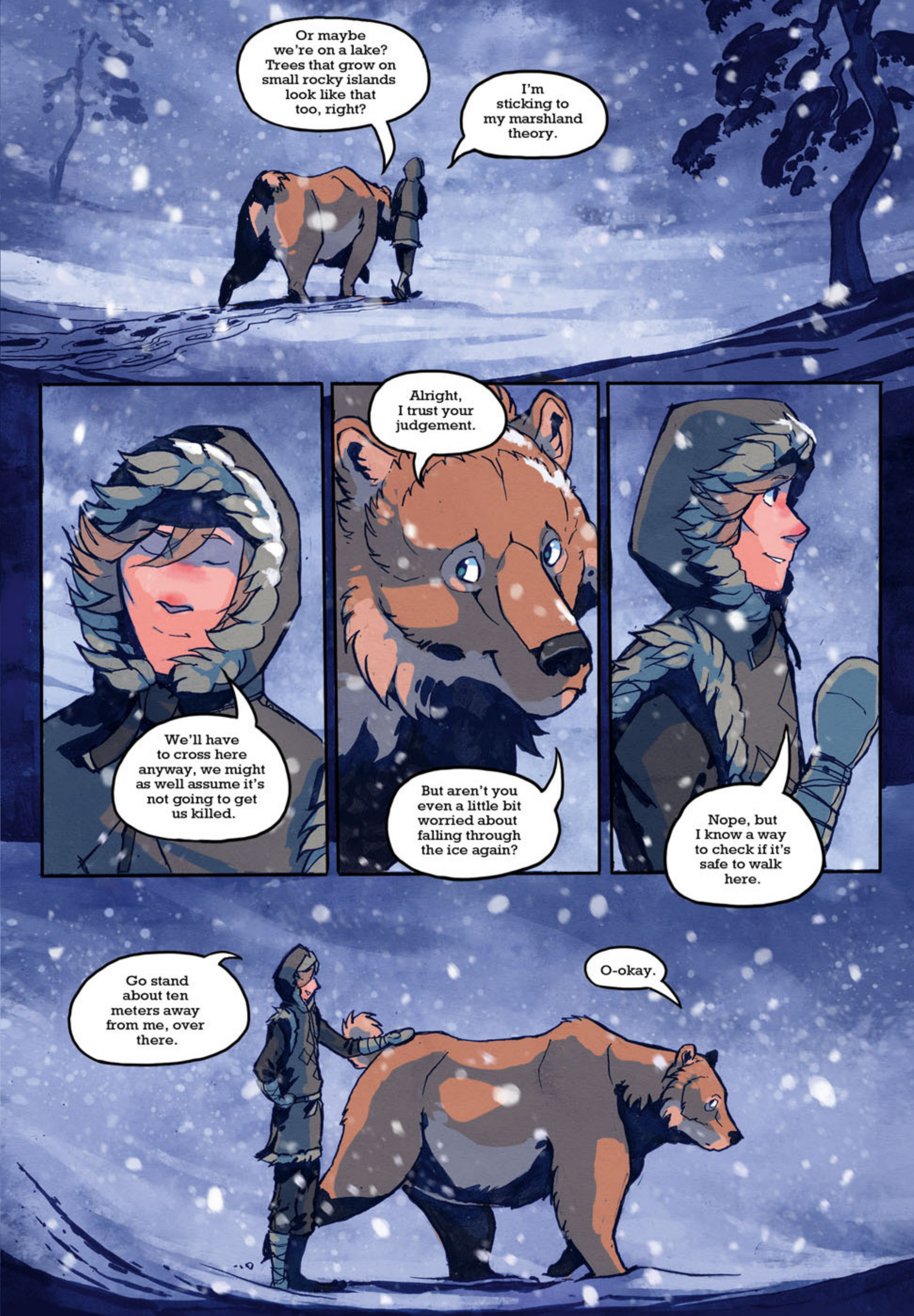

I...really don't think anyone said that.
I know you were thinking it.
Oy! Bird incoming!
Great. It's the vomiting one.
Hey! You there! You do *not* have permission to land on me or my friend!
I'm in a foul mood, and I'm capable of unspeakable cruelty!
That's better.
Now, if you would be kind enough to just place that thing in my hand.
Nice and easy, like a good bird.

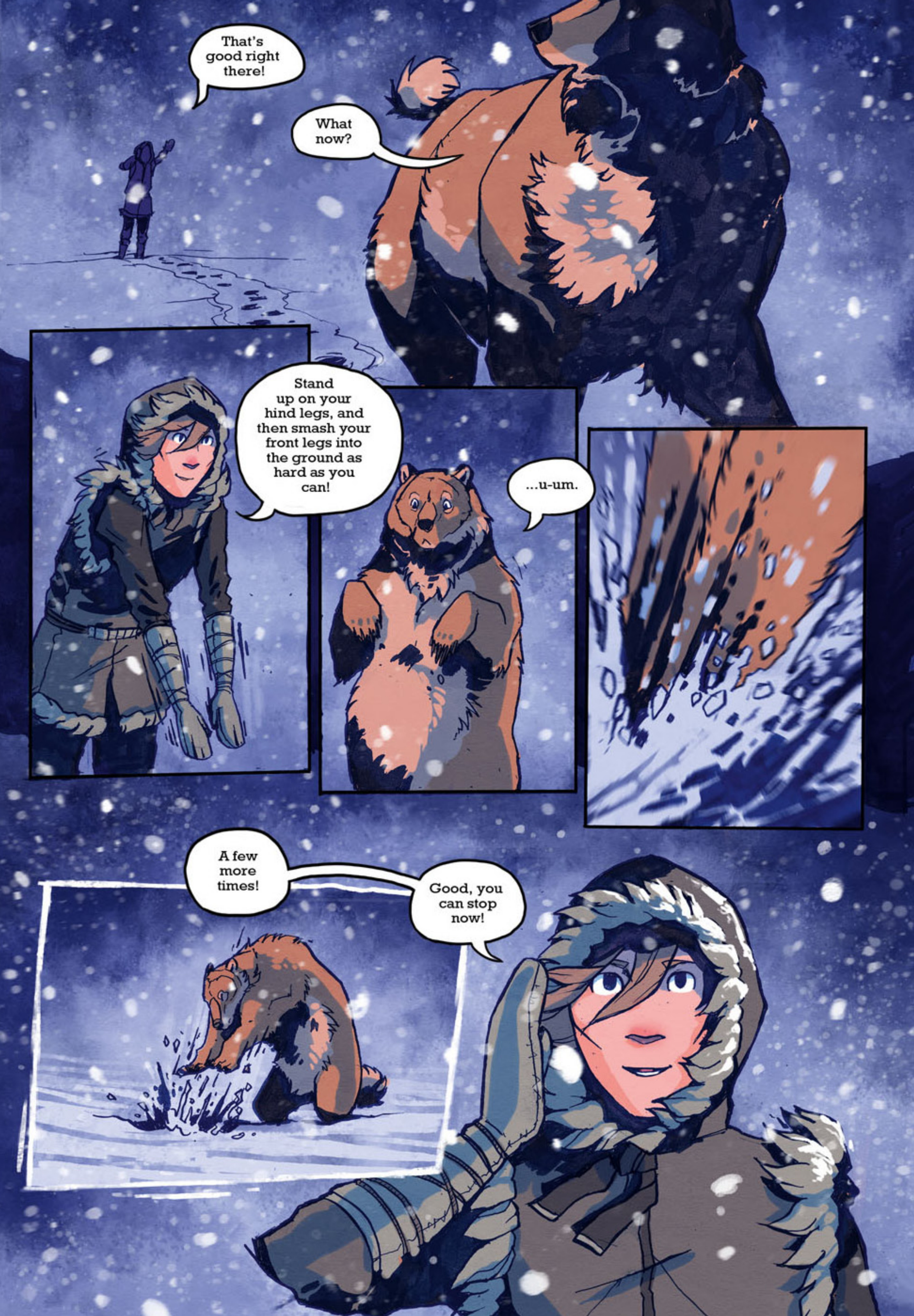

TSAK!
What's *wrong* with you animals?!!
Why can't you behave like *people!?!*
Are my eyes still in their sockets?
Uh, yes, they seem fine. Looks like it hit you right below the eye.

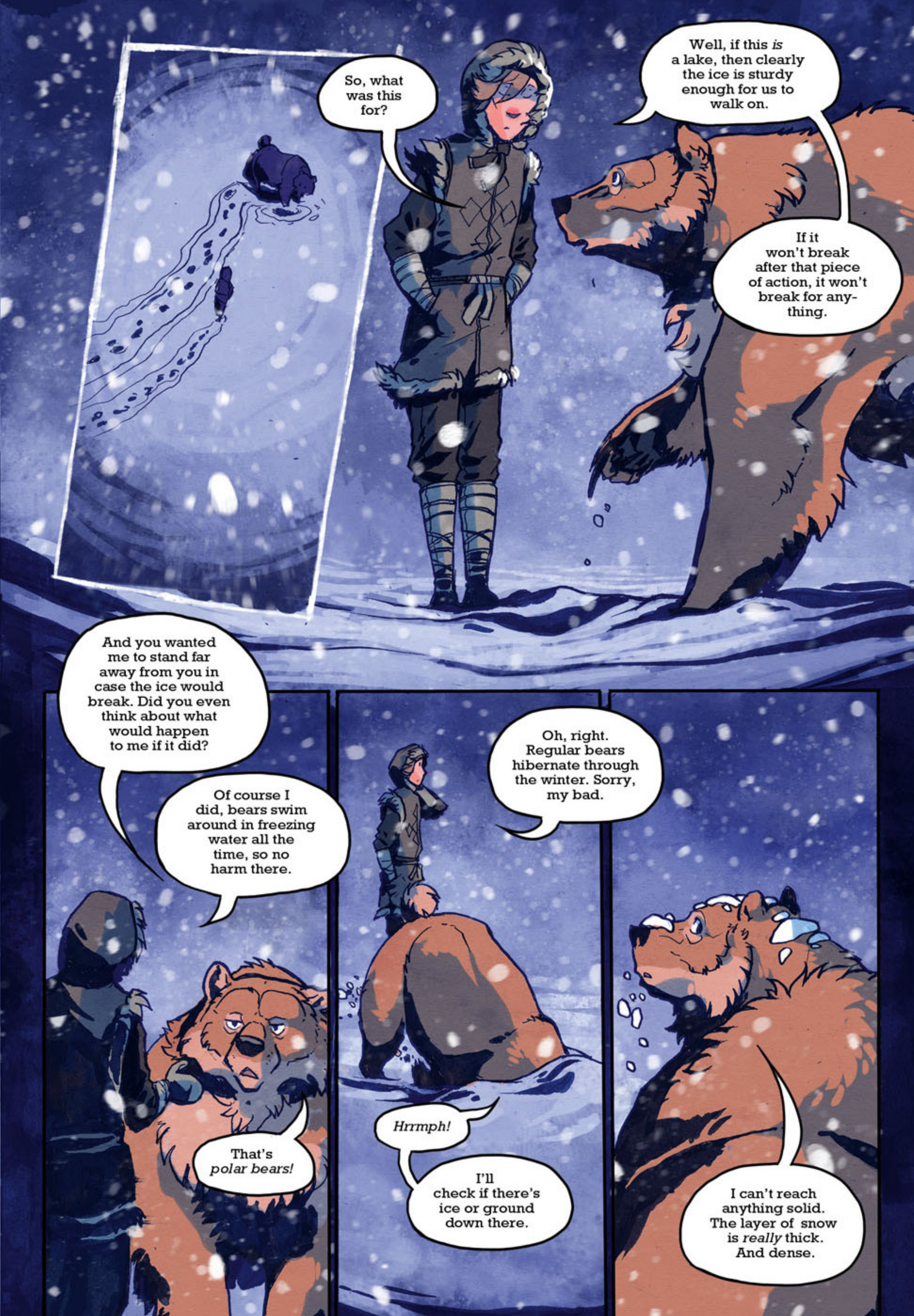

Can we get going now? I *really* want to get going.
Wanna get up on my back again?
No thanks, I think I'd better walk this time.
Why? I was so good at carrying you! I didn't get you killed or anything.
You *did* kind of ram me into a tree, remember?
B-but..I'm so sorry! I promise I'll be more careful!
Can you ever forgive me?
Relax, I'm just messing with you. It's not even why I prefer to walk.

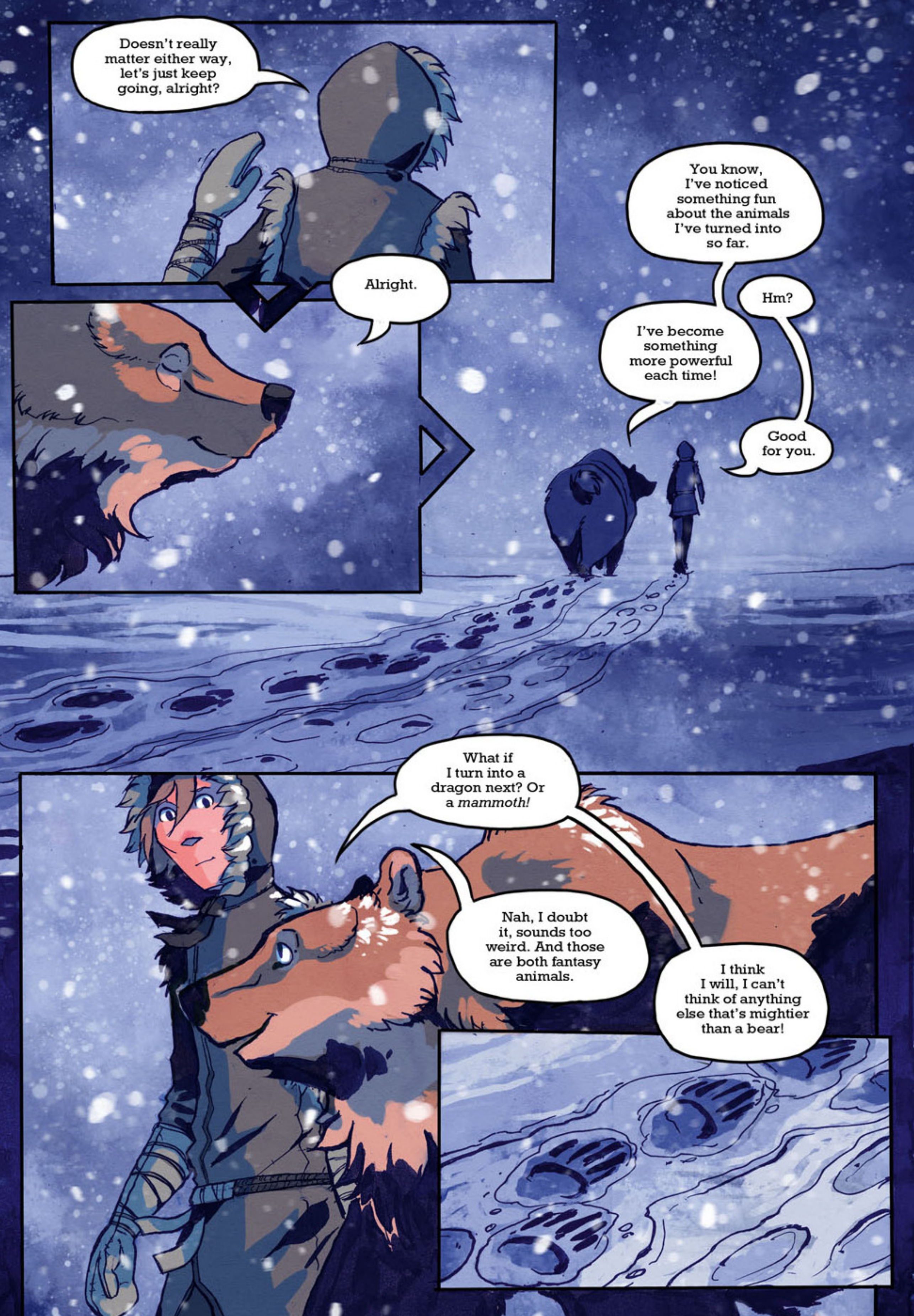

I'm pretty sure I'll fall asleep again if I just sit motionless on your back...
...and I would rather not lose any limbs to frostbite
It's possible I wouldn't even wake up again.
For the record: I'm *way* past the point where I actually care if that happens.
But I figured you would prefer for me to stay alive and all, so...
I-!
Yes! Definitely! Do *not* fall asleep!
Let's start moving before your furless body shuts down.
I'm always astounded by how brittle you humans really are.
So: between *that* tree, and that other tree, was it?

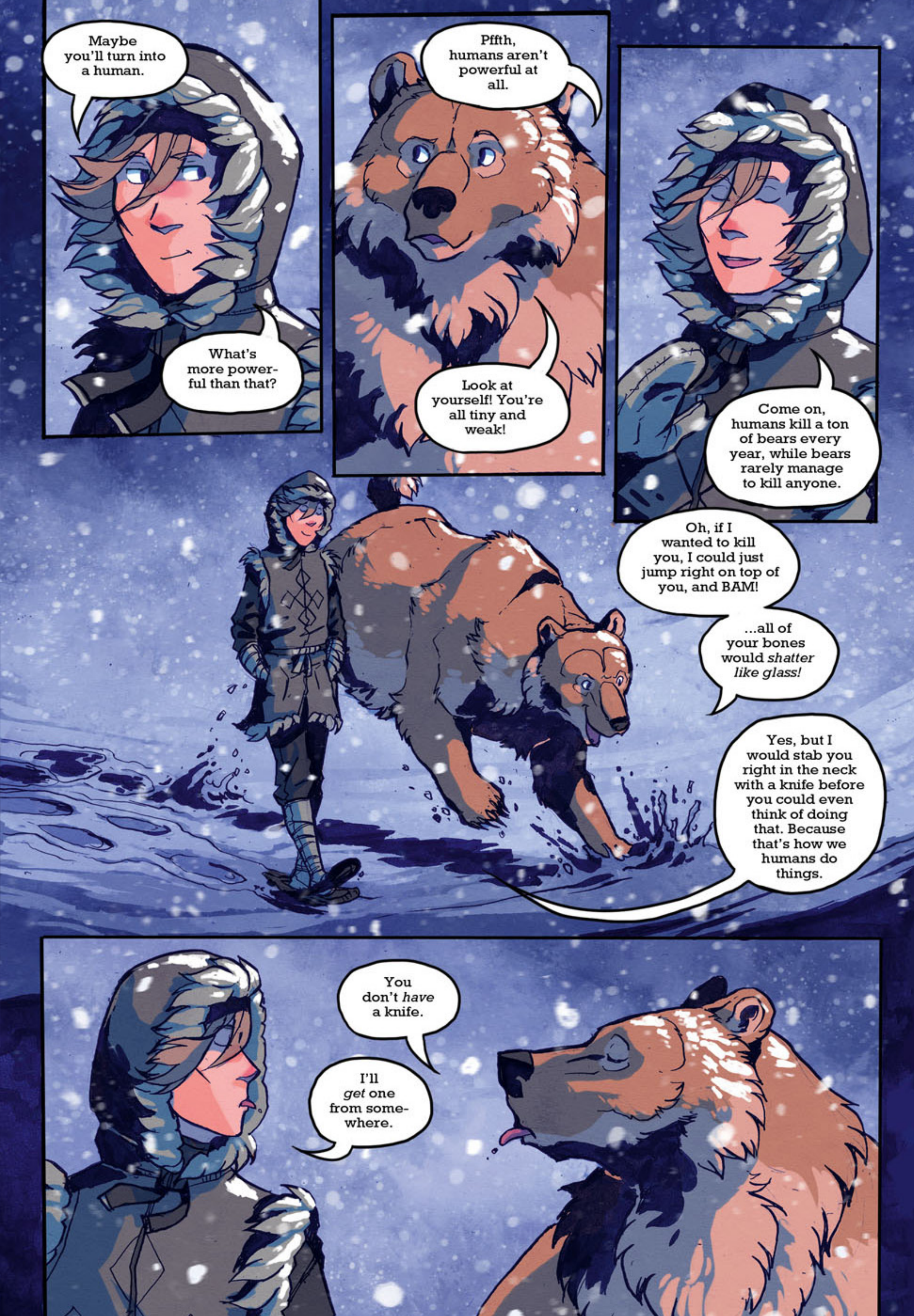

There are almost no trees over here.
Why do you think that is?
Could be marshland, I guess.
At least judging from those ill-grown pine trees.

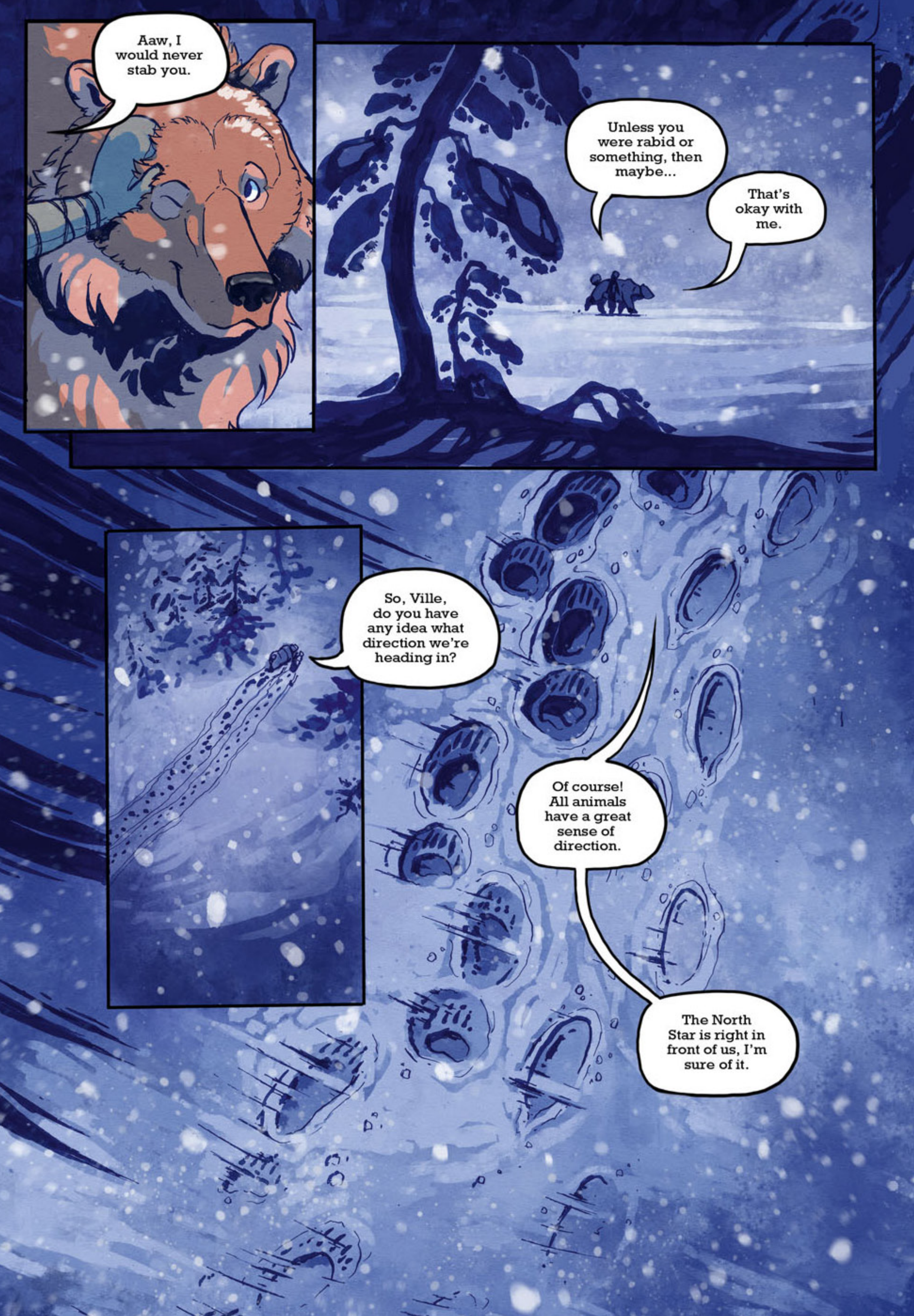

Or maybe we're on a lake? Trees that grow on small rocky islands look like that too, right?
I'm sticking to my marshland theory.
We'll have to cross here anyway, we might as well assume it's not going to get us killed.
Alright, I trust your judgement.
But aren't you even a little bit worried about falling through the ice again?
Nope, but I know a way to check if it's safe to walk here.
Go stand about ten meters away from me, over there.
O-okay.

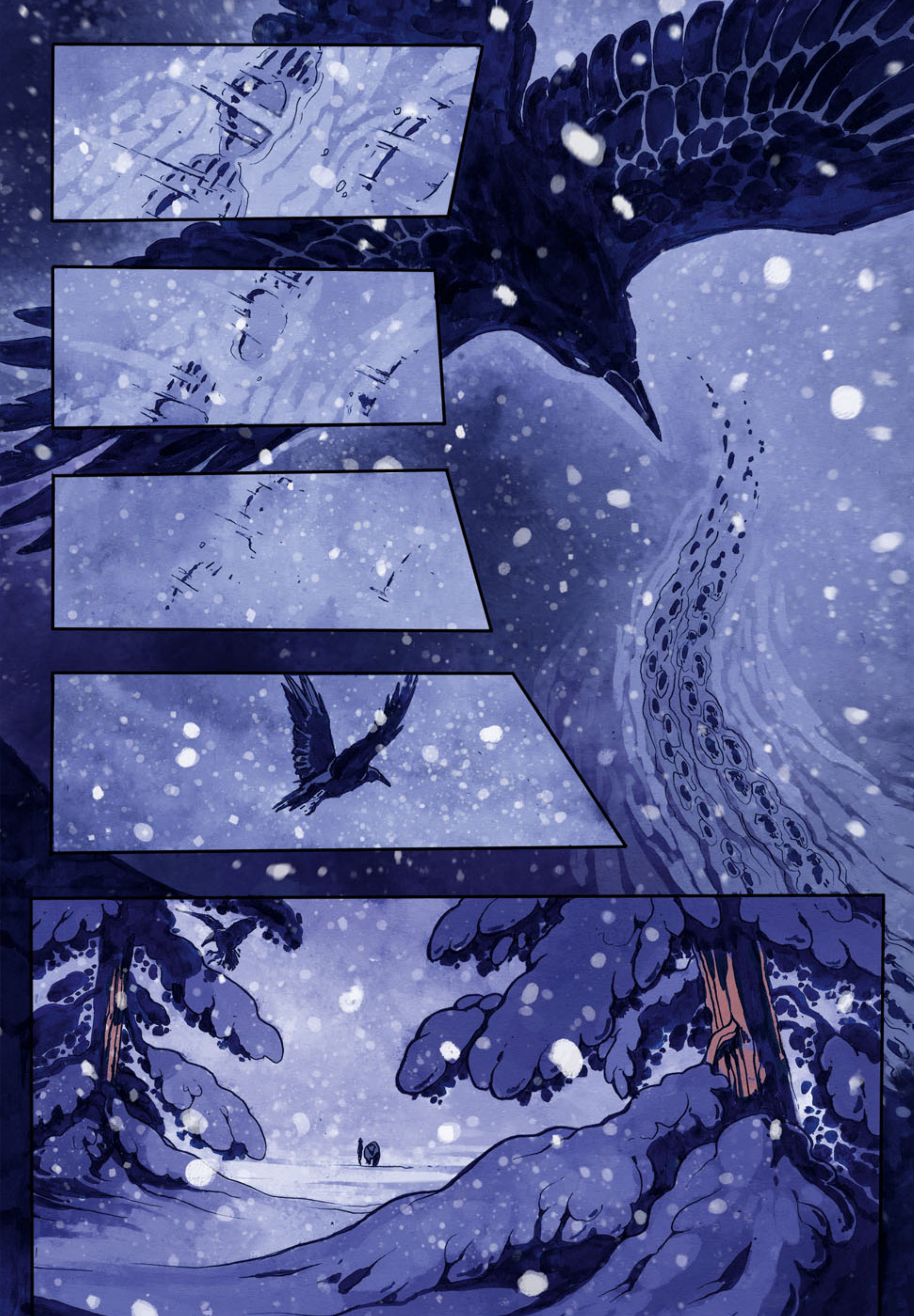

That's good right there!
What now?
Stand up on your hind legs, and then smash your front legs into the ground as hard as you can!
...u-um.
A few more times!
Good, you can stop now!

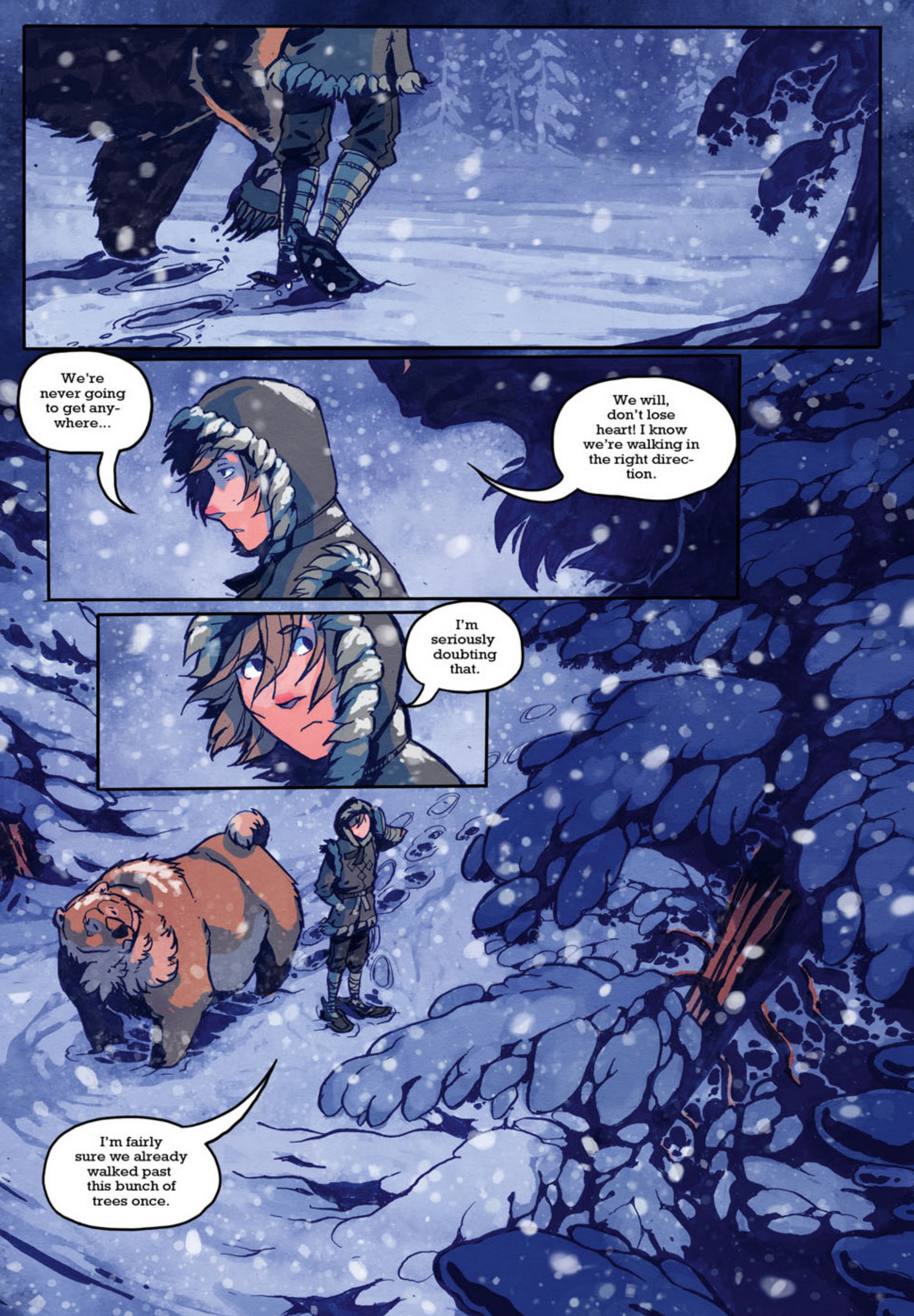

So, what was this for?
Well, if this *is* a lake, then clearly the ice is sturdy enough for us to walk on.
If it won't break after that piece of action, it won't break for anything.
And you wanted me to stand far away from you in case the ice would break. Did you even think about what would happen to me if it did?
Of course I did, bears swim around in freezing water all the time, so no harm there.
That's *polar bears!*
Oh, right. Regular bears hibernate through the winter. Sorry, my bad.
Hrrmph!
I'll check if there's ice or ground down there.
I can't reach anything solid. The layer of snow is *really* thick. And dense.

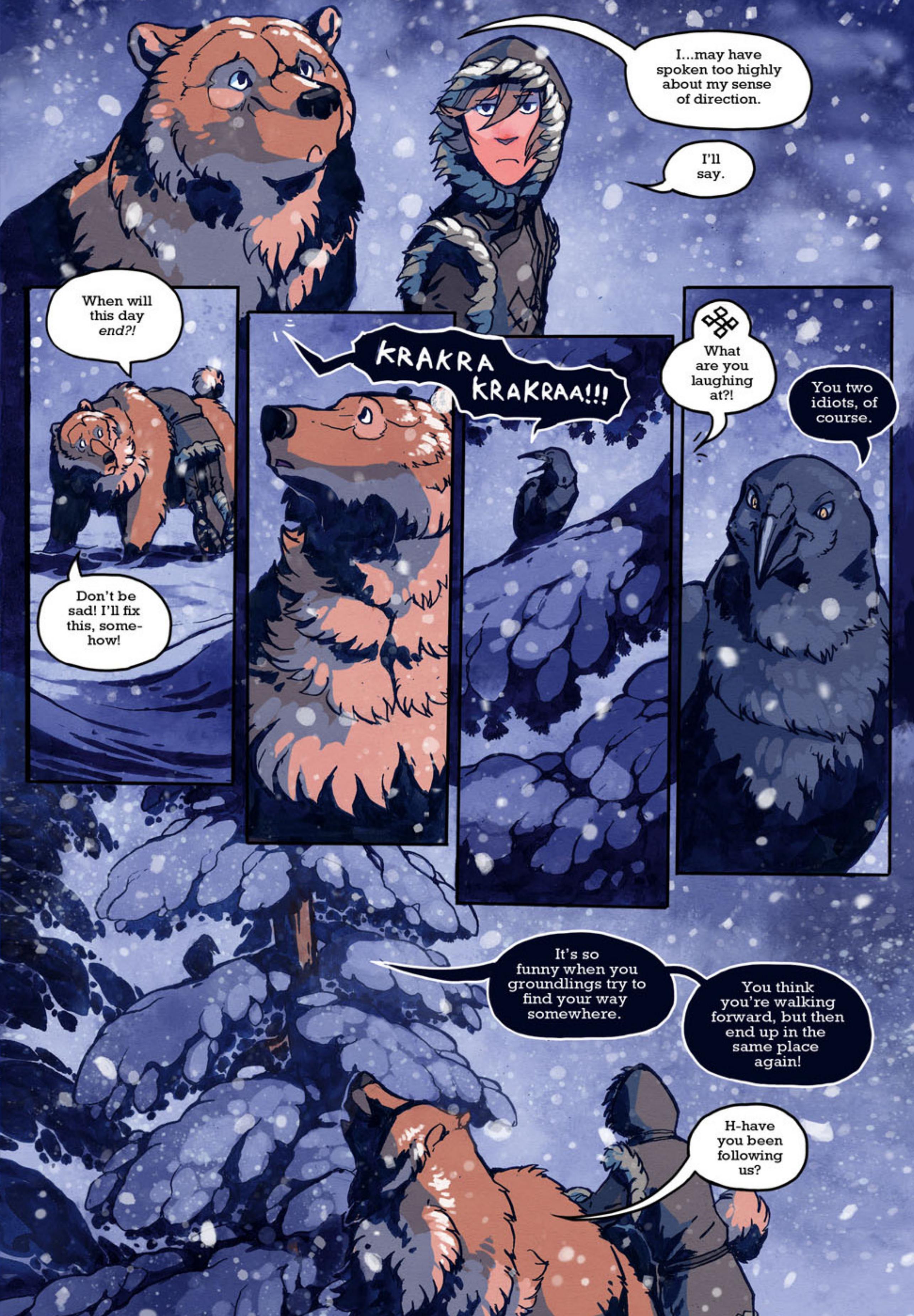

Doesn't really matter either way, let's just keep going, alright?
Alright.
You know, I've noticed something fun about the animals I've turned into so far.
Hm?
I've become something more powerful each time!
Good for you.
What if I turn into a dragon next? Or a *mammoth!*
Nah, I doubt it, sounds too weird. And those are both fantasy animals.
I think I will, I can't think of anything else that's mightier than a bear!

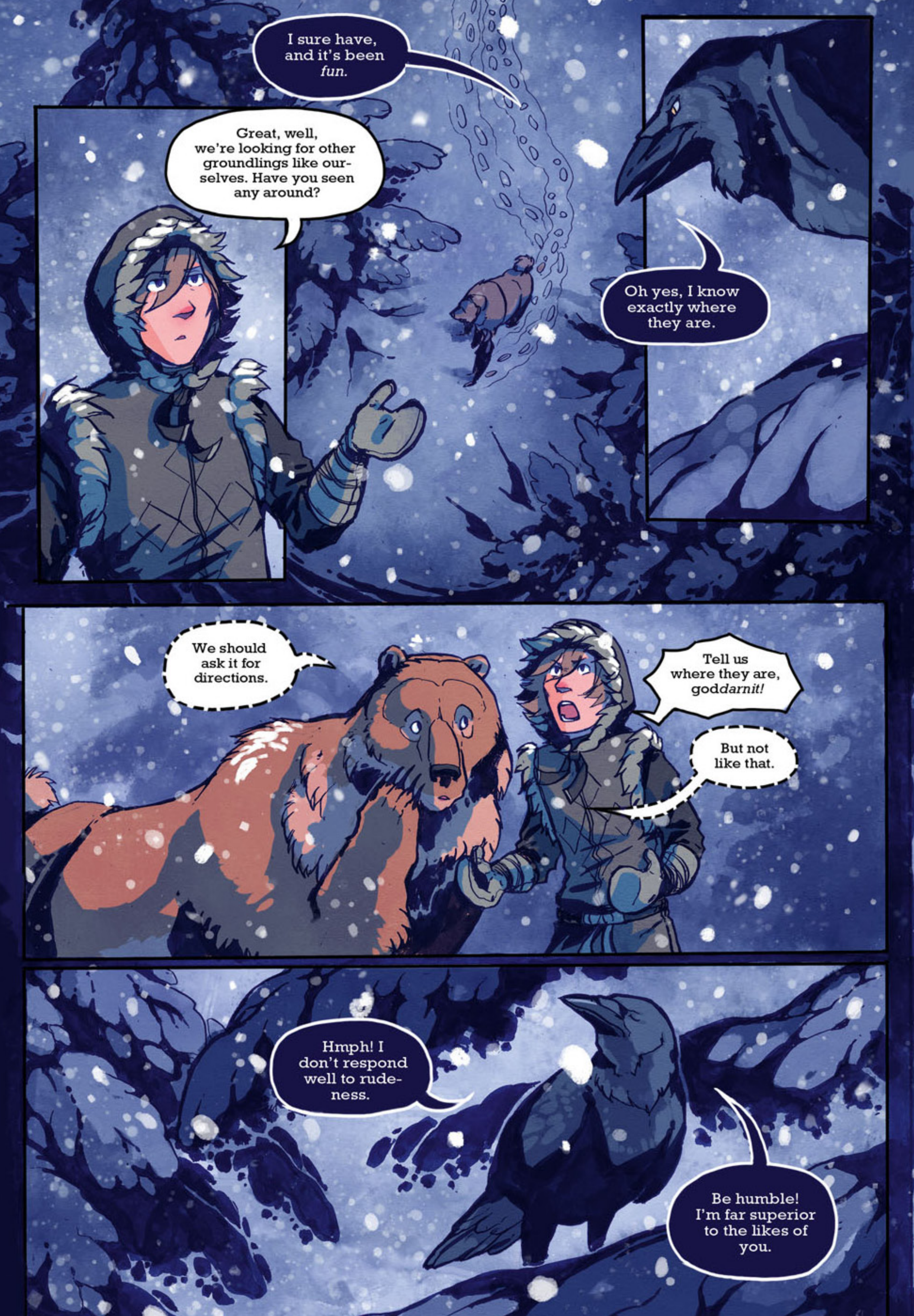

Maybe you'll turn into a human.
What's more powerful than that?
Pffth, humans aren't powerful at all.
Look at yourself! You're all tiny and weak!
Come on, humans kill a ton of bears every year, while bears rarely manage to kill anyone.
Oh, if I wanted to kill you, I could just jump right on top of you, and BAM!
...all of your bones would *shatter like glass!*
Yes, but I would stab you right in the neck with a knife before you could even think of doing that. Because that's how we humans do things.
You don't *have* a knife.
I'll *get* one from somewhere.

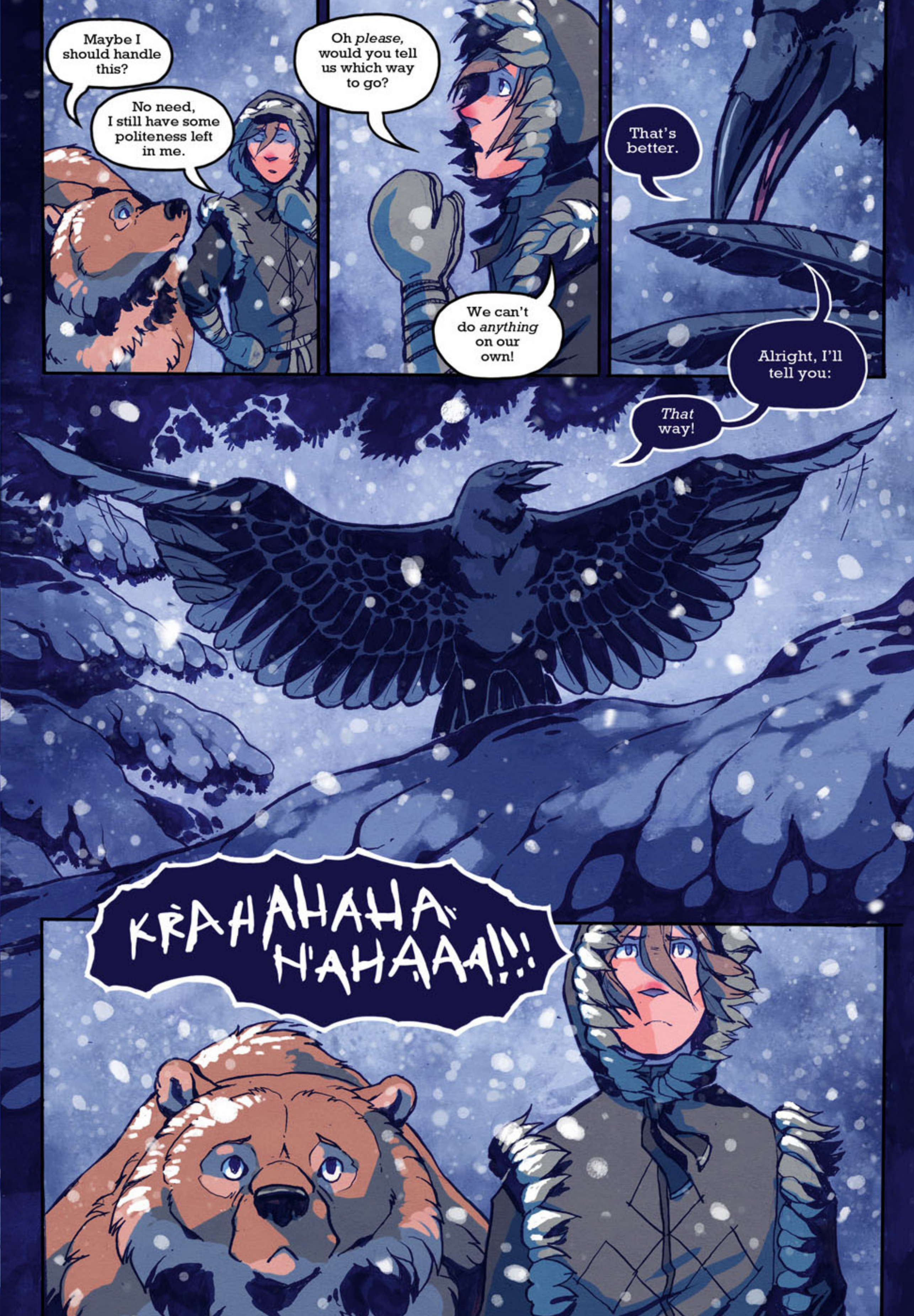

Aaw, I would never stab you.
Unless you were rabid or something, then maybe...
That's okay with me.
So, Ville, do you have any idea what direction we're heading in?
Of course! All animals have a great sense of direction.
The North Star is right in front of us, I'm sure of it.

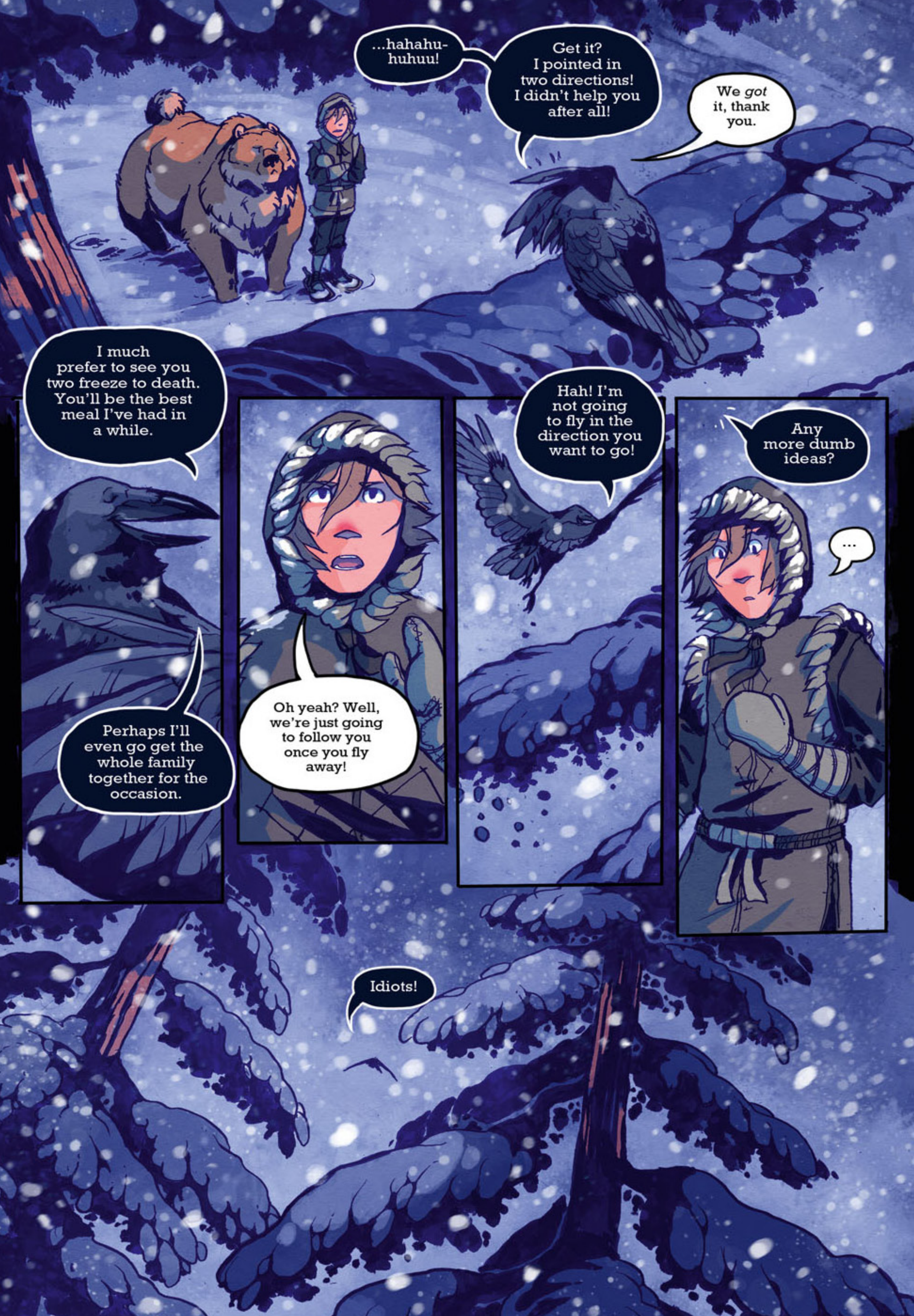


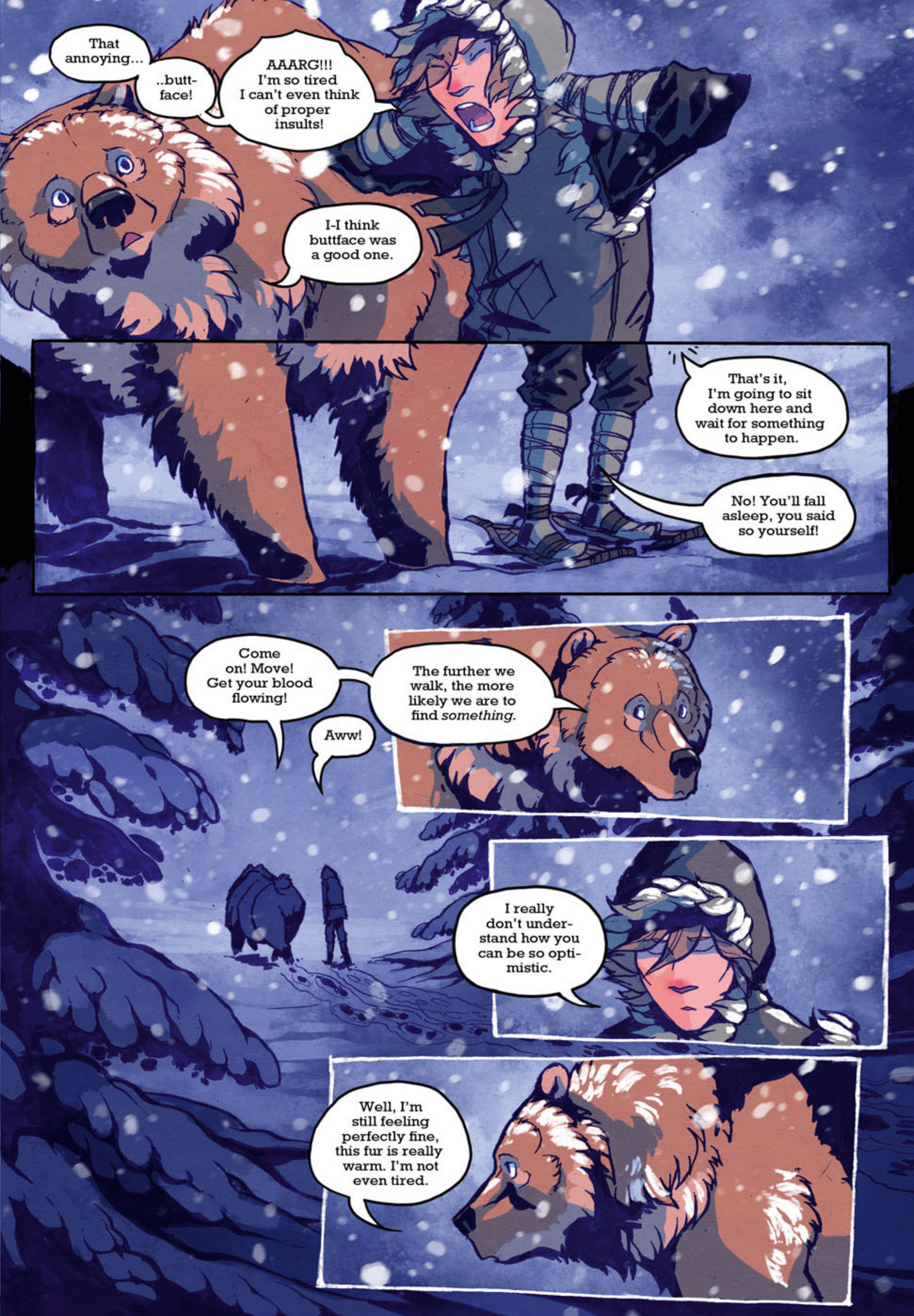

We're never going to get anywhere...
We will, don't lose heart! I know we're walking in the right direction.
I'm seriously doubting that.
I'm fairly sure we already walked past this bunch of trees once.

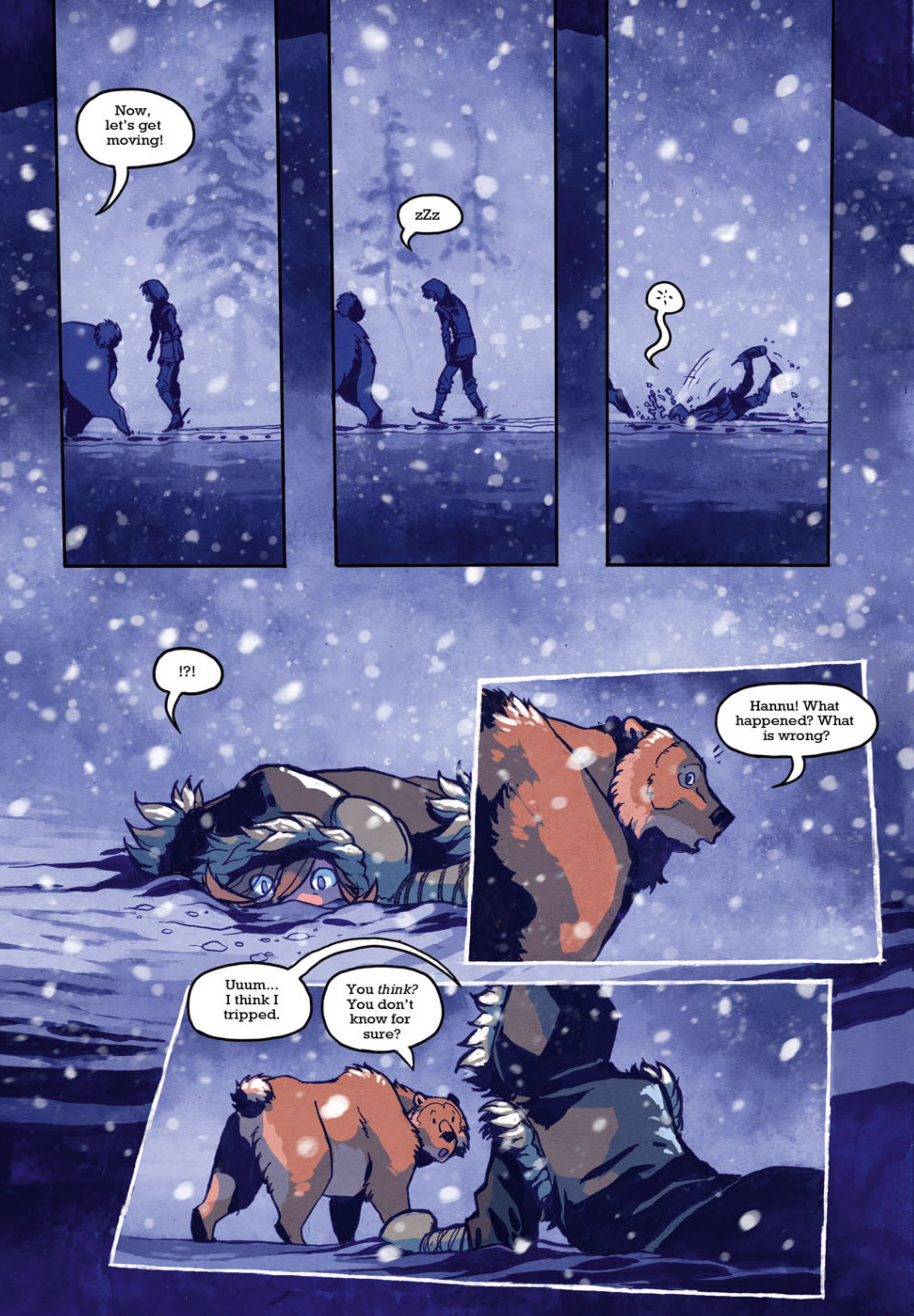

I...may have spoken too highly about my sense of direction.
I'll say.
When will this day *end?!*
Don't be sad! I'll fix this, somehow!
KRAKRA KRAKRAA!!!
What are you laughing at?!
You two idiots, of course.
It's so funny when you groundlings try to find your way somewhere.
You think you're walking forward, but then end up in the same place again!
H-have you been following us?

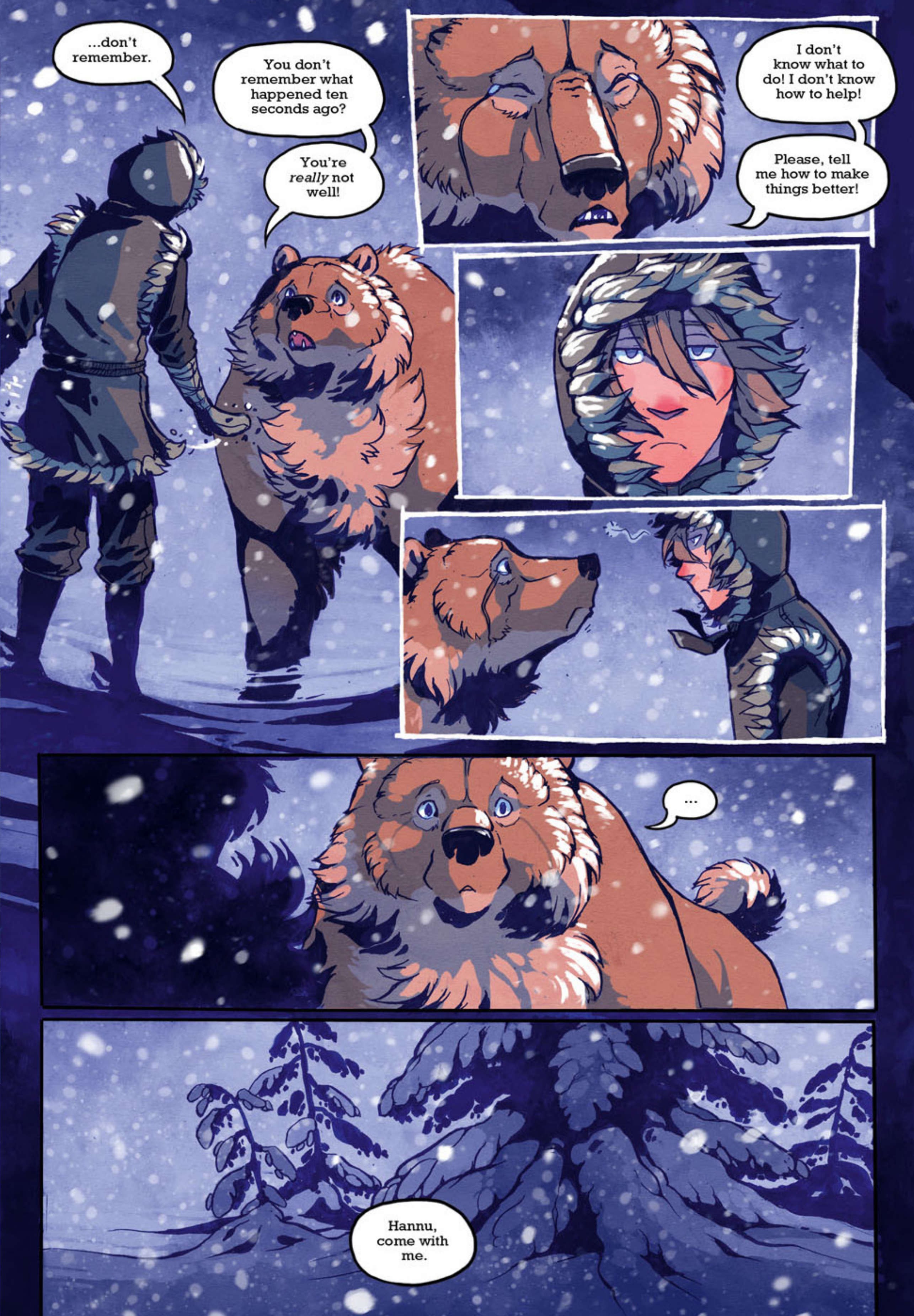

I sure have, and it's been *fun.*
Great, well, we're looking for other groundlings like ourselves. Have you seen any around?
Oh yes, I know exactly where they are.
We should ask it for directions.
Tell us where they are, god*darnit!*
But not like that.
Hmph! I don't respond well to rudeness.
Be humble! I'm far superior to the likes of you.

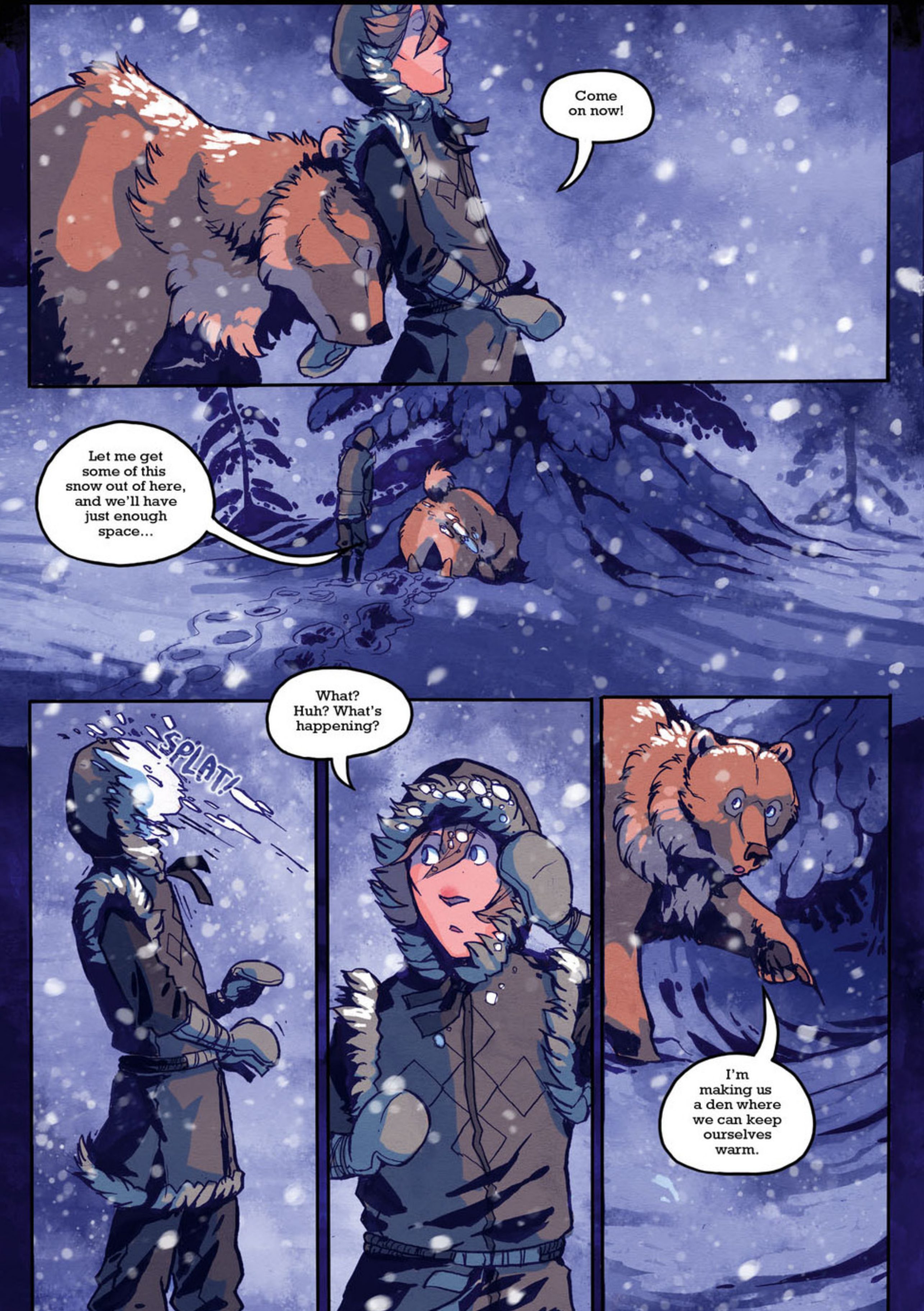

Maybe I should handle this?
No need, I still have some politeness left in me.
Oh *please,* would you tell us which way to go?
We can't do *anything* on our own!
That's better.
Alright, I'll tell you:
That way!
KRAHAHAHA H'AHAAA!!!

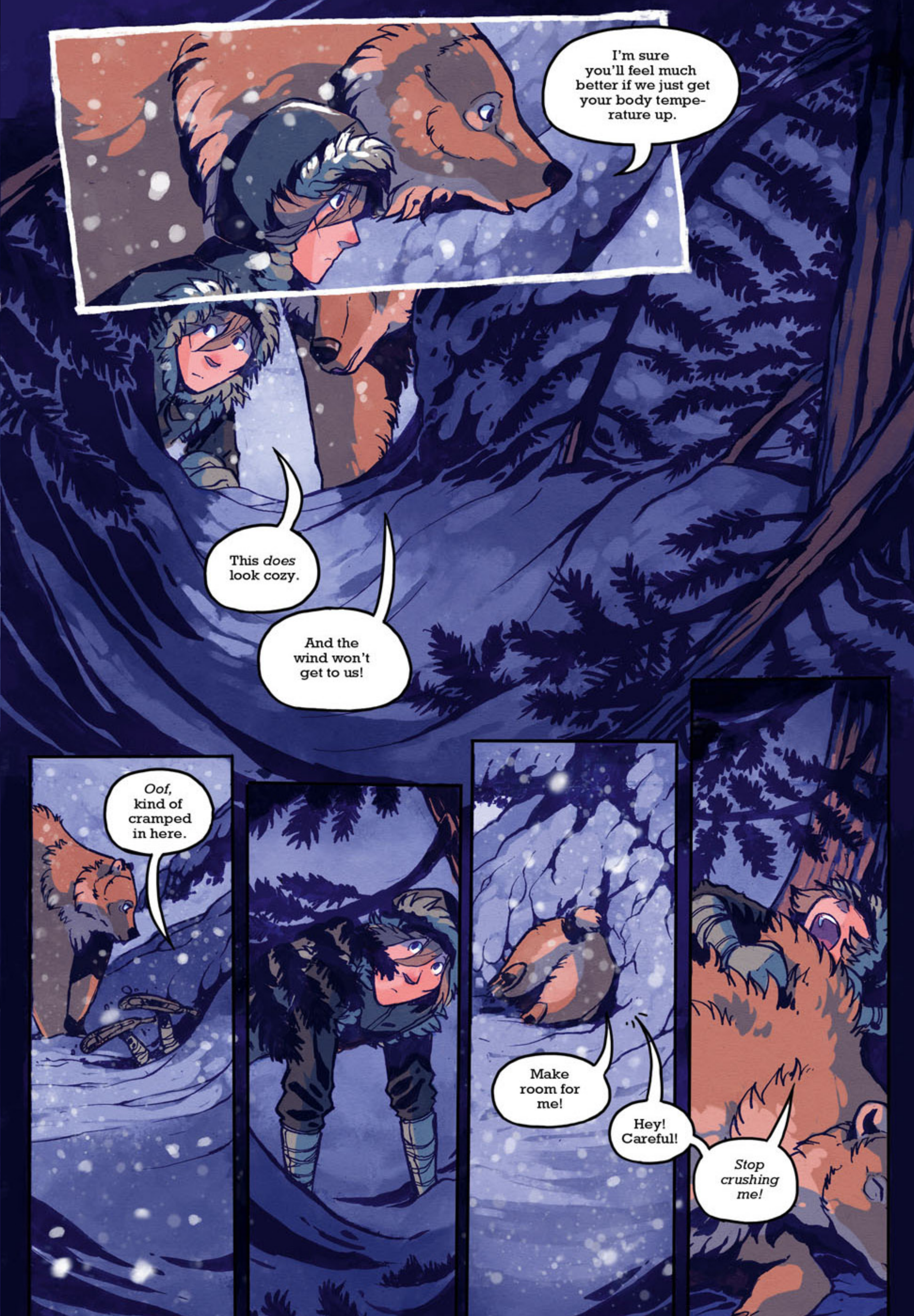

...hahahu-huhuu!
Get it? I pointed in two directions! I didn't help you after all!
We *got* it, thank you.
I much prefer to see you two freeze to death. You'll be the best meal I've had in a while.
Perhaps I'll even go get the whole family together for the occasion.
Oh yeah? Well, we're just going to follow you once you fly away!
Hah! I'm not going to fly in the direction you want to go!
Any more dumb ideas?
...
Idiots!

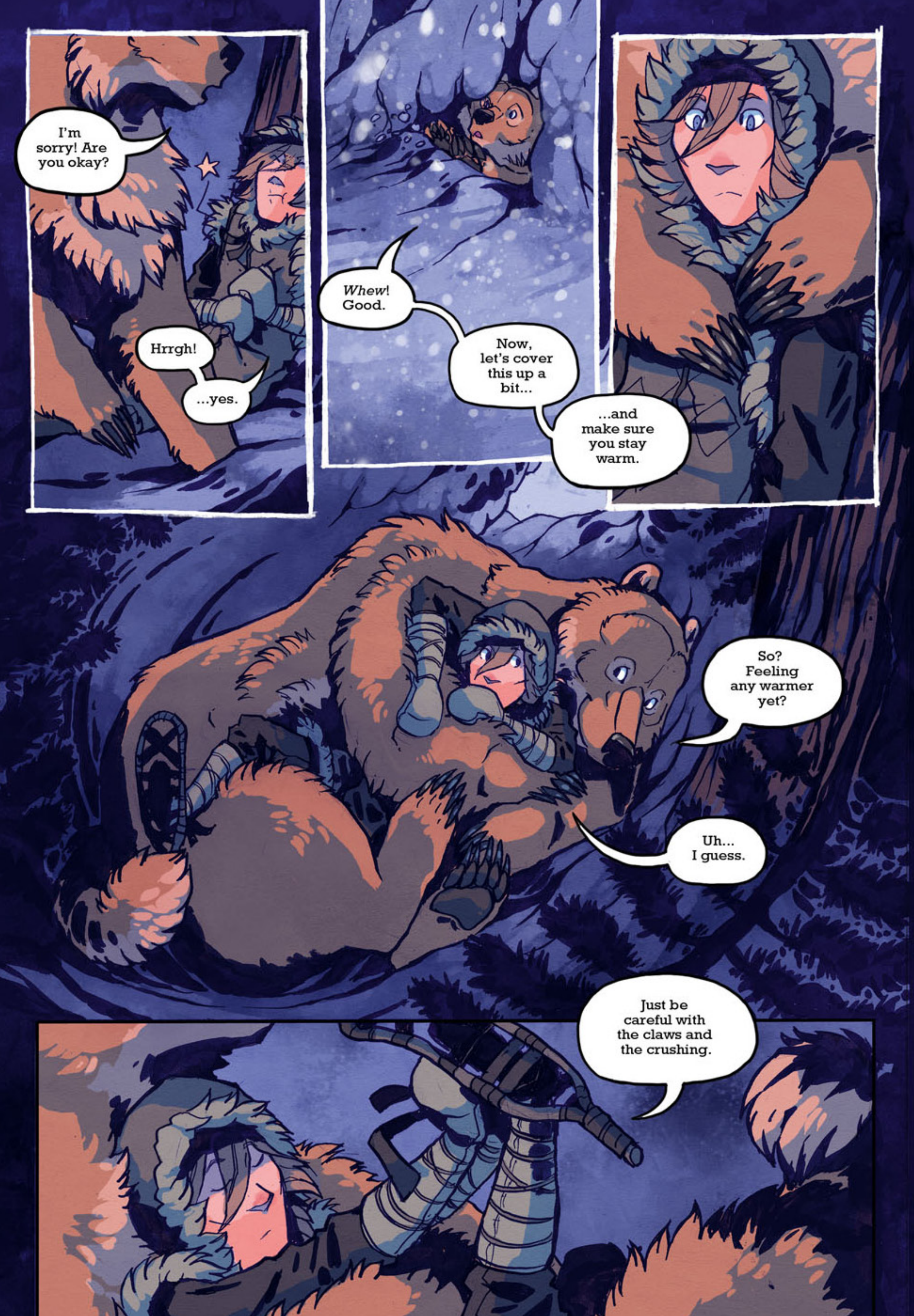

That annoying...
..butt-face!
AAARG!!! I'm so tired I can't even think of proper insults!
I-I think buttface was a good one.
That's it, I'm going to sit down here and wait for something to happen.
No! You'll fall asleep, you said so yourself!
Come on! Move! Get your blood flowing!
Aww!
The further we walk, the more likely we are to find *something.*
I really don't understand how you can be so optimistic.
Well, I'm still feeling perfectly fine, this fur is really warm. I'm not even tired.

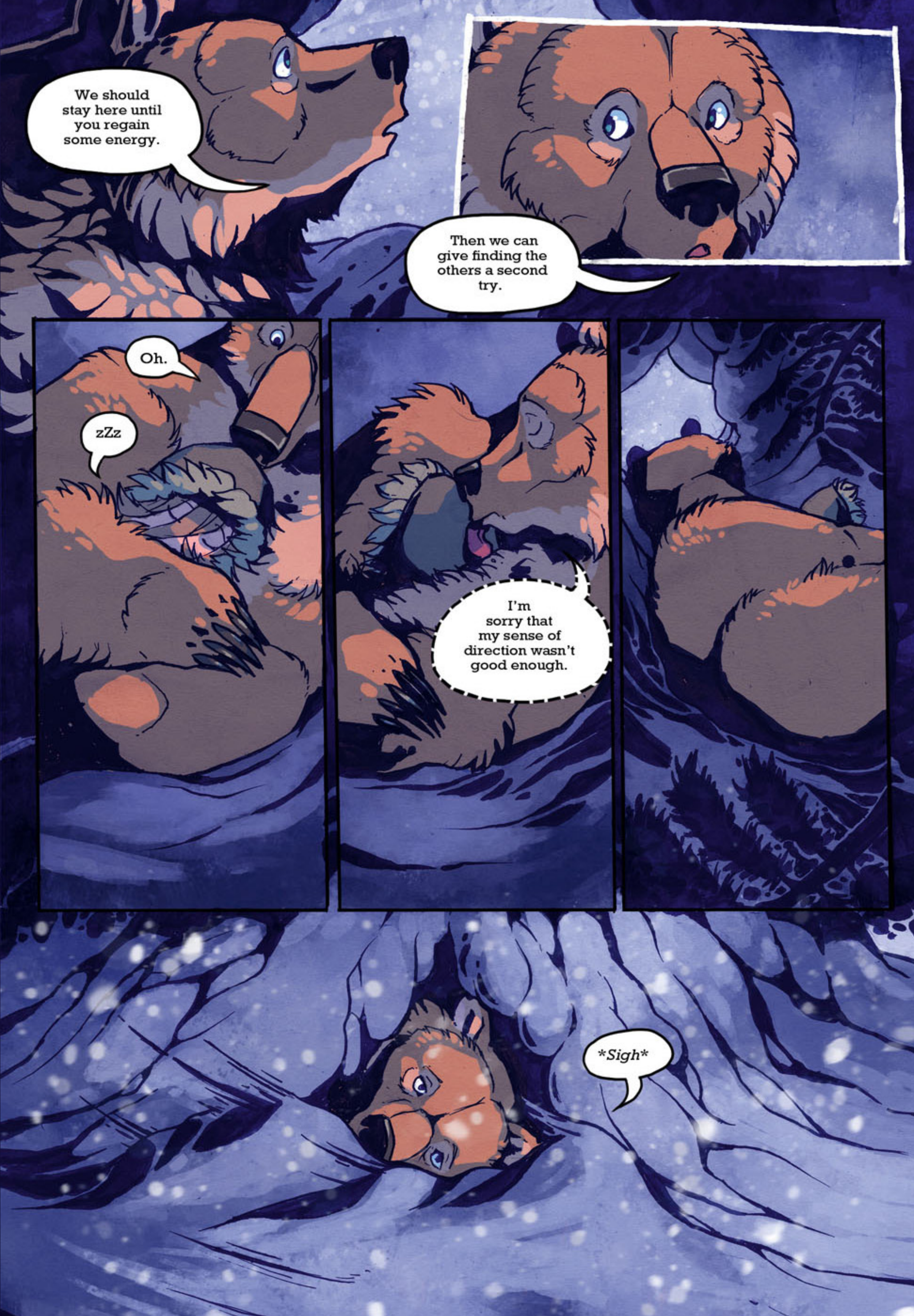

Now, let's get moving!
zZz
!?!
Hannu! What happened? What is wrong?
Uuum... I think I tripped.
You *think?* You don't know for sure?

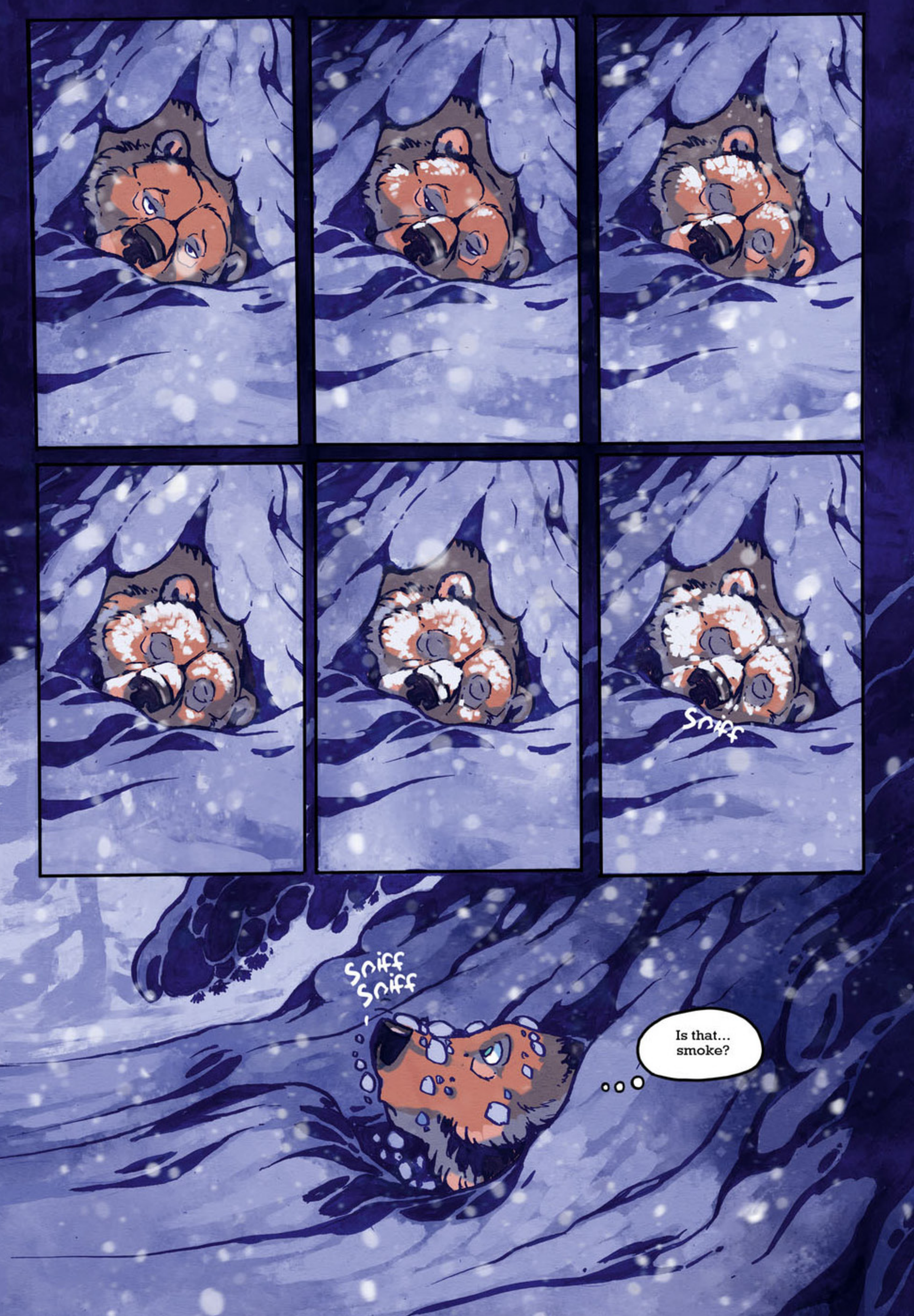

...don't remember.
You don't remember what happened ten seconds ago?
You're *really* not well!
I don't know what to do! I don't know how to help!
Please, tell me how to make things better!
...
Hannu, come with me.

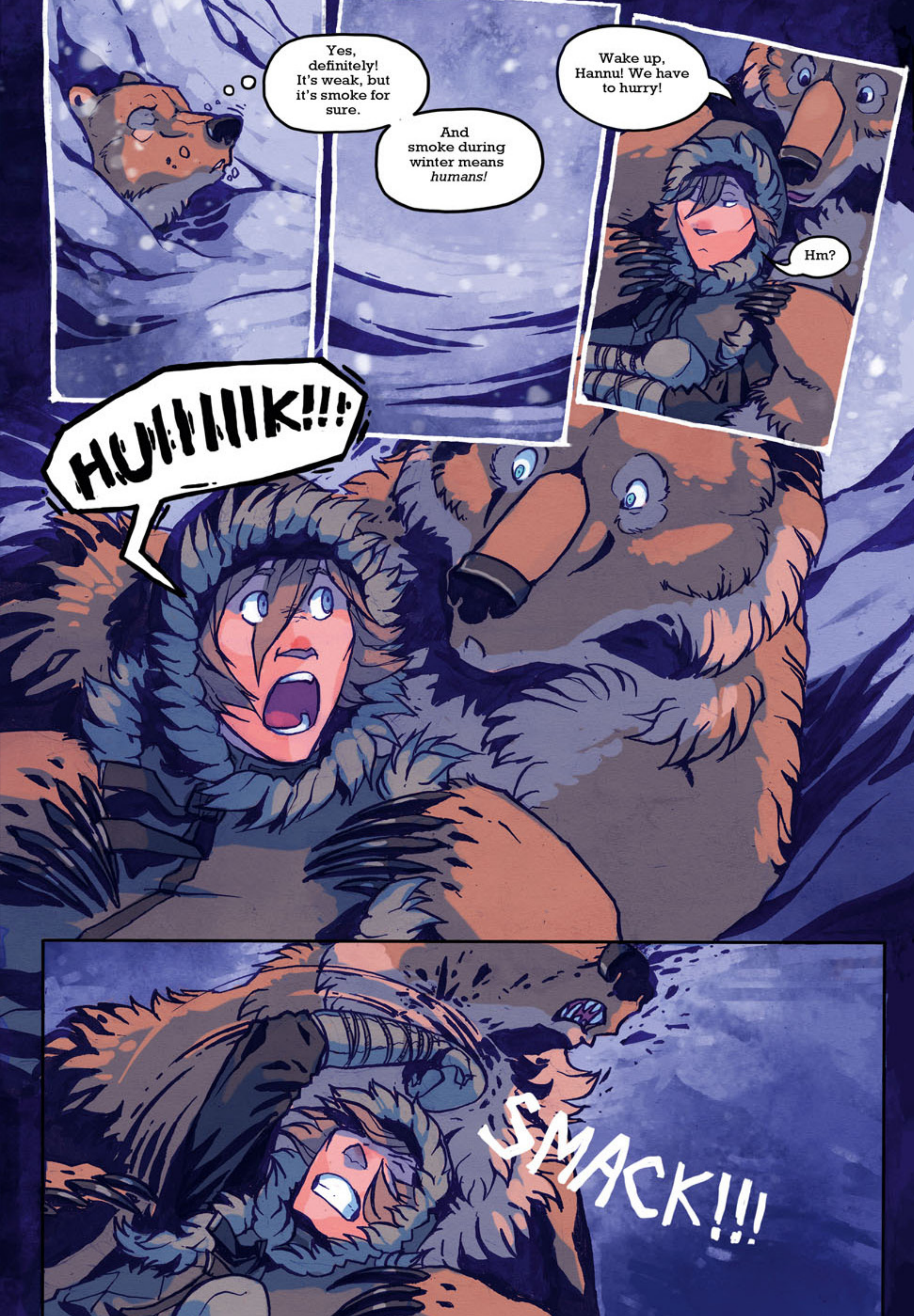

Come on now!
Let me get some of this snow out of here, and we'll have just enough space...
SPLAT!
What? Huh? What's happening?
I'm making us a den where we can keep ourselves warm.

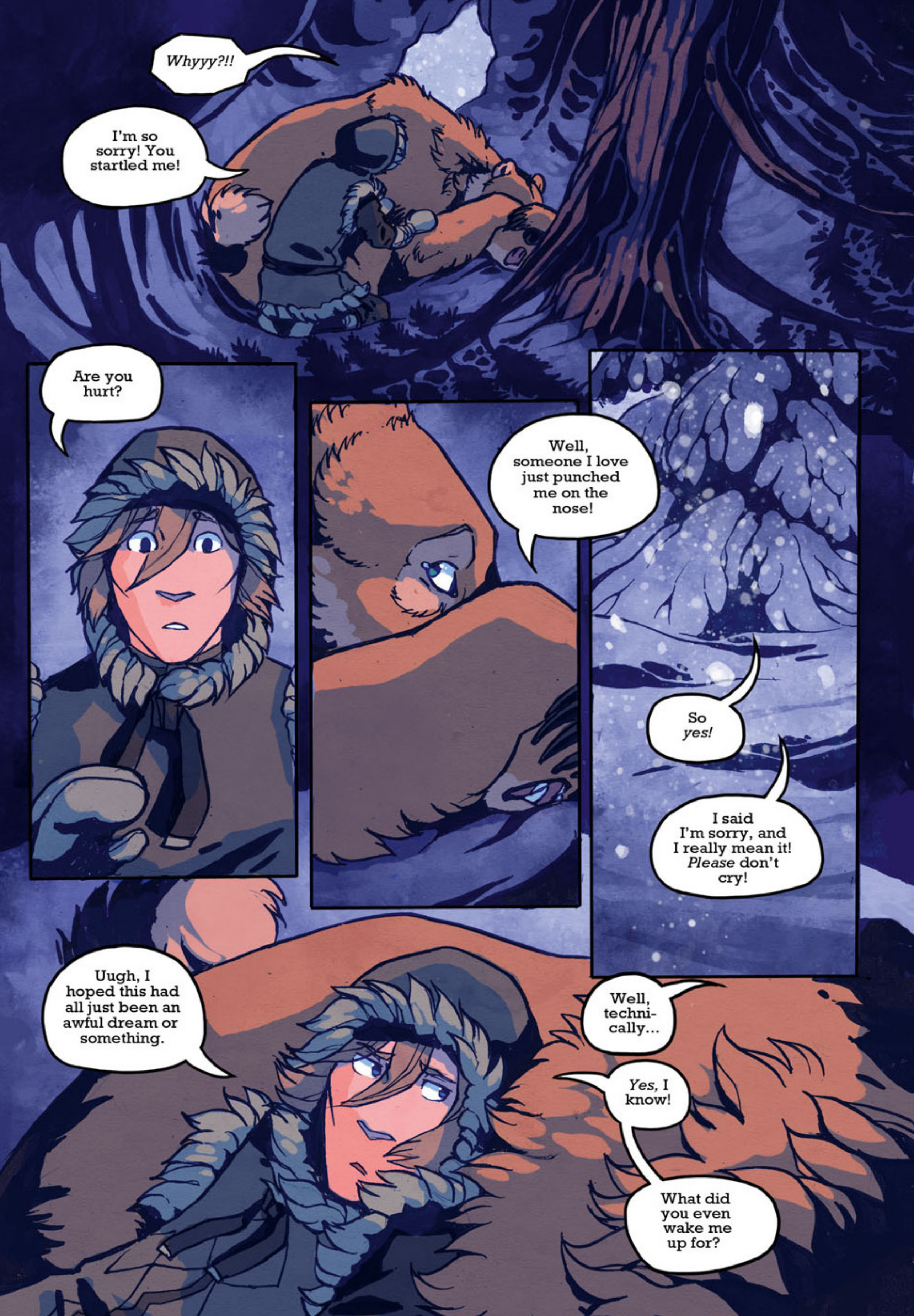

I'm sure you'll feel much better if we just get your body temperature up.
This *does* look cozy.
And the wind won't get to us!
Oof, kind of cramped in here.
Make room for me!
Hey! Careful!
Stop crushing me!

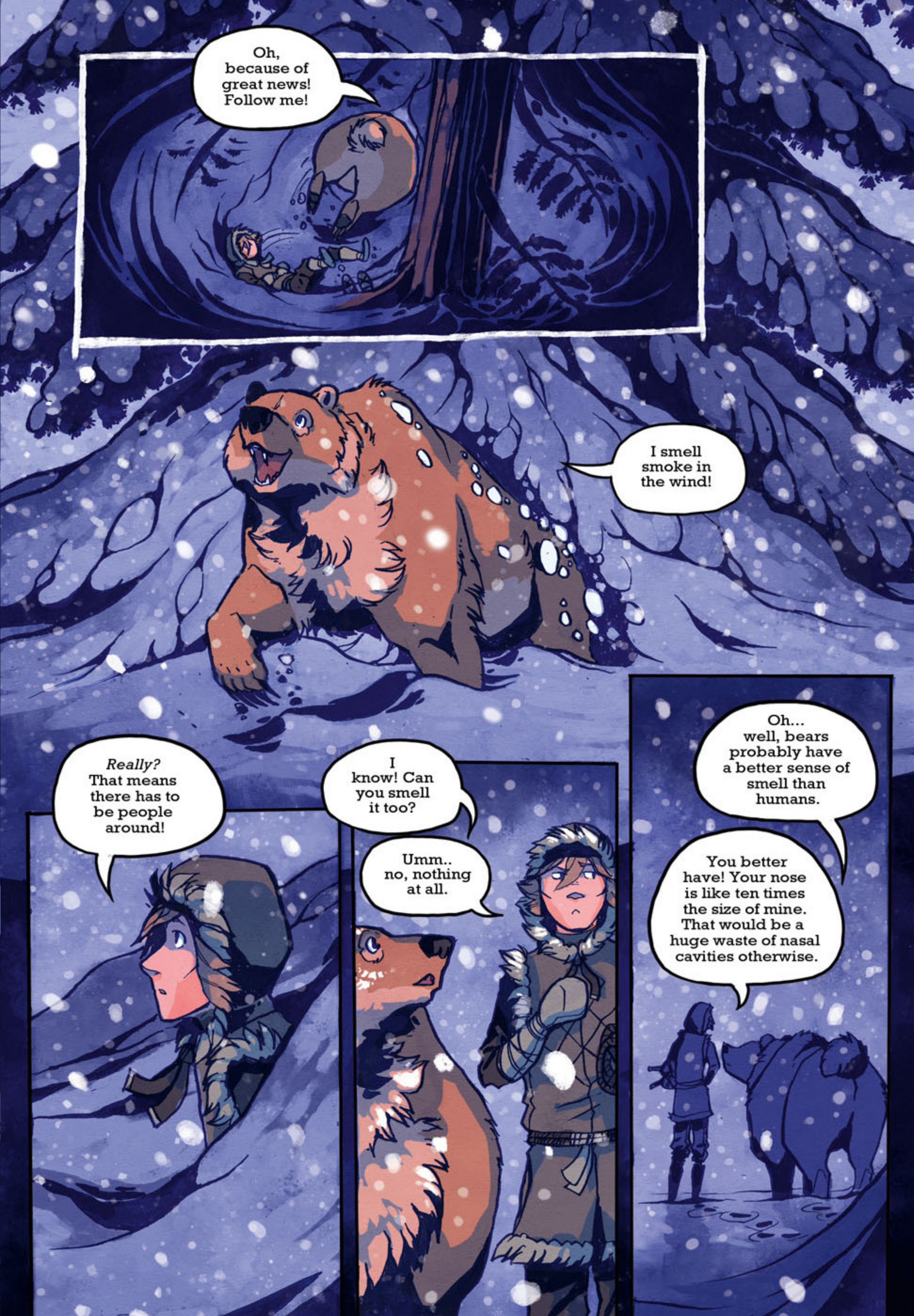

I'm sorry! Are you okay?
Hrrgh!
...yes.
Whew! Good.
Now, let's cover this up a bit...
...and make sure you stay warm.
So? Feeling any warmer yet?
Uh... I guess.
Just be careful with the claws and the crushing.

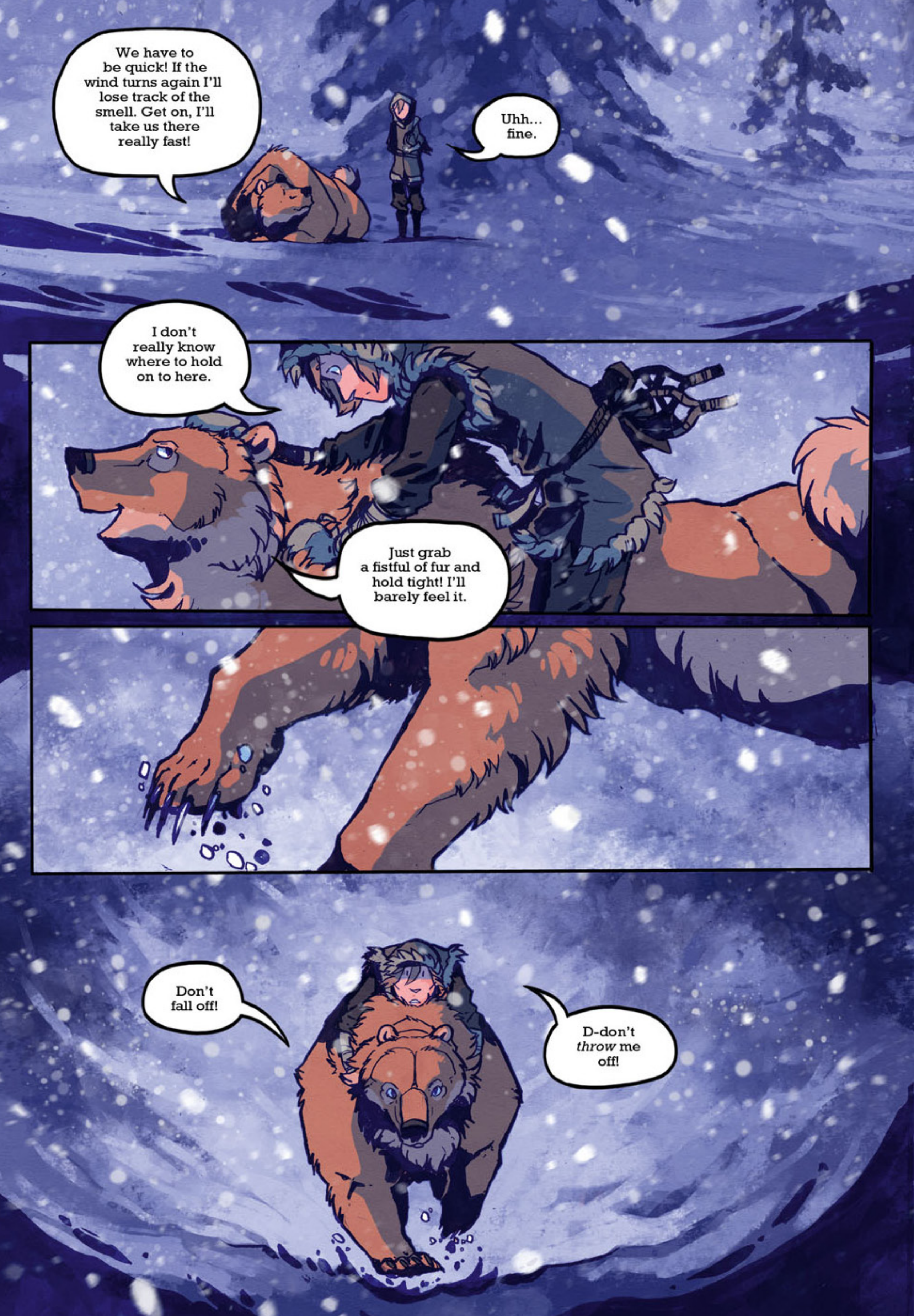

We should stay here until you regain some energy.
Then we can give finding the others a second try.
Oh.
zZz
I'm sorry that my sense of direction wasn't good enough.
Sigh

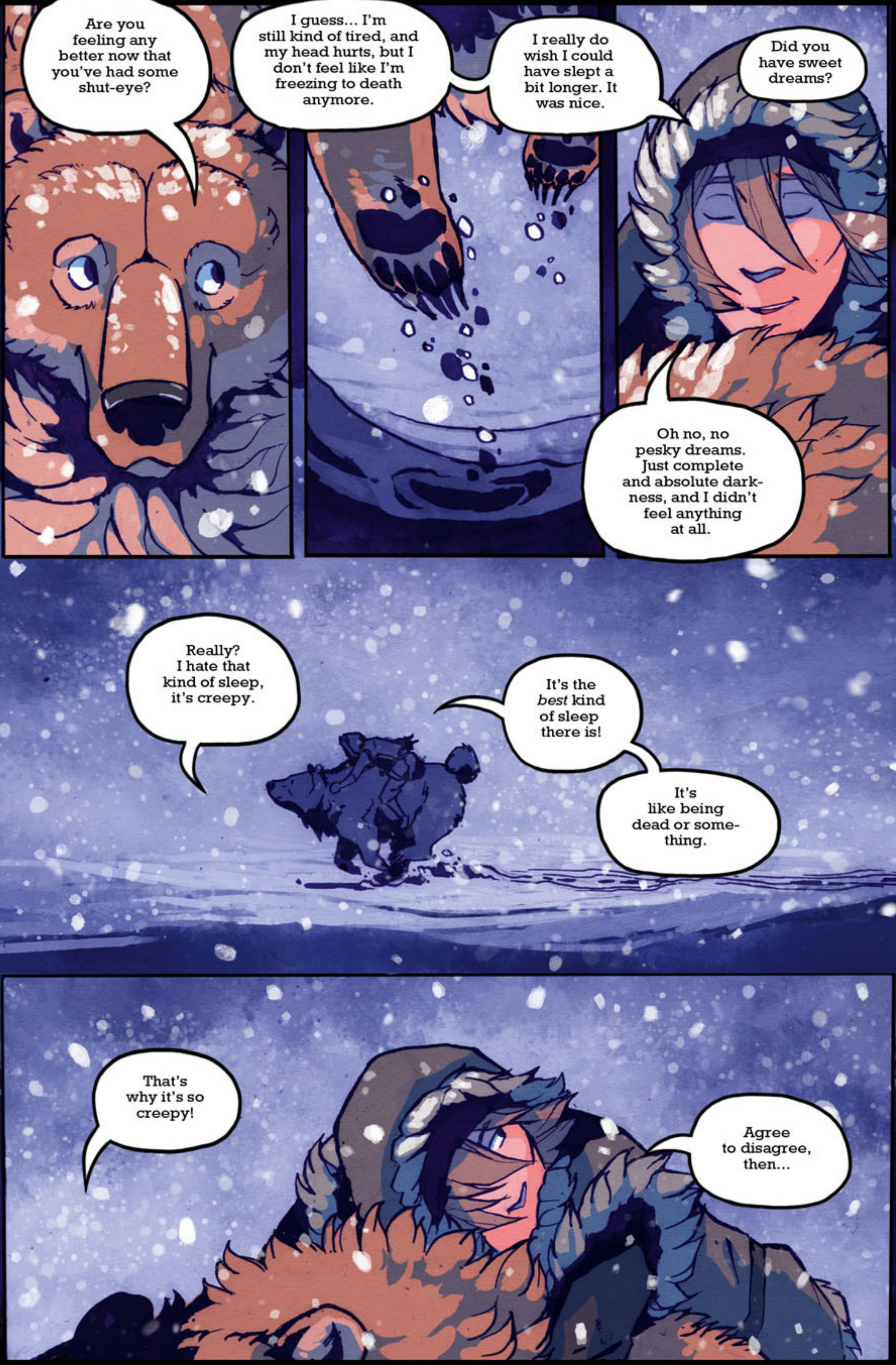

Sniff
Sniff
Sniff
Is that... smoke?

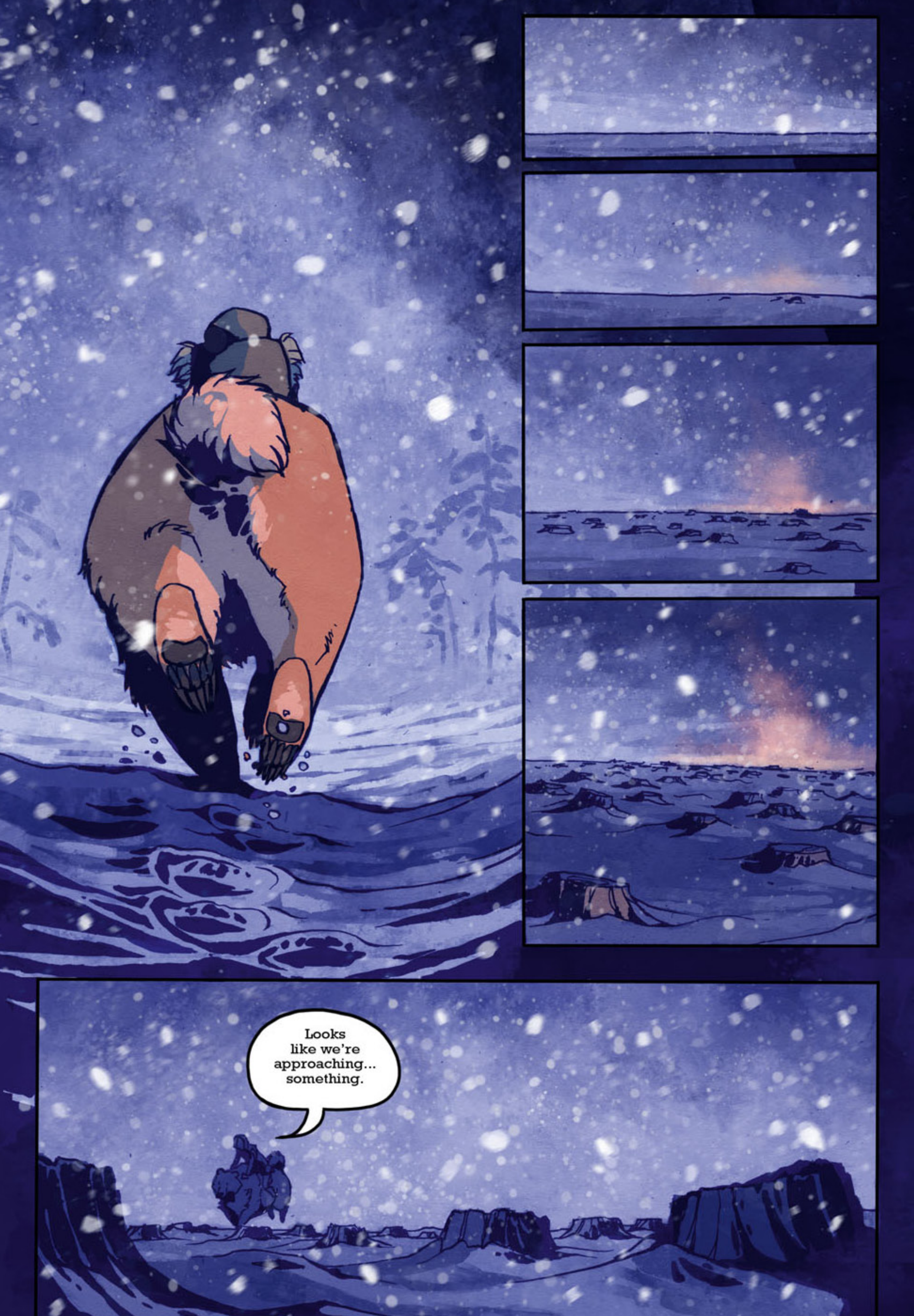

Yes, definitely! It's weak, but it's smoke for sure.
And smoke during winter means *humans!*
Wake up, Hannu! We have to hurry!
Hm?
HUUUIIK!!!
SMACK!!!

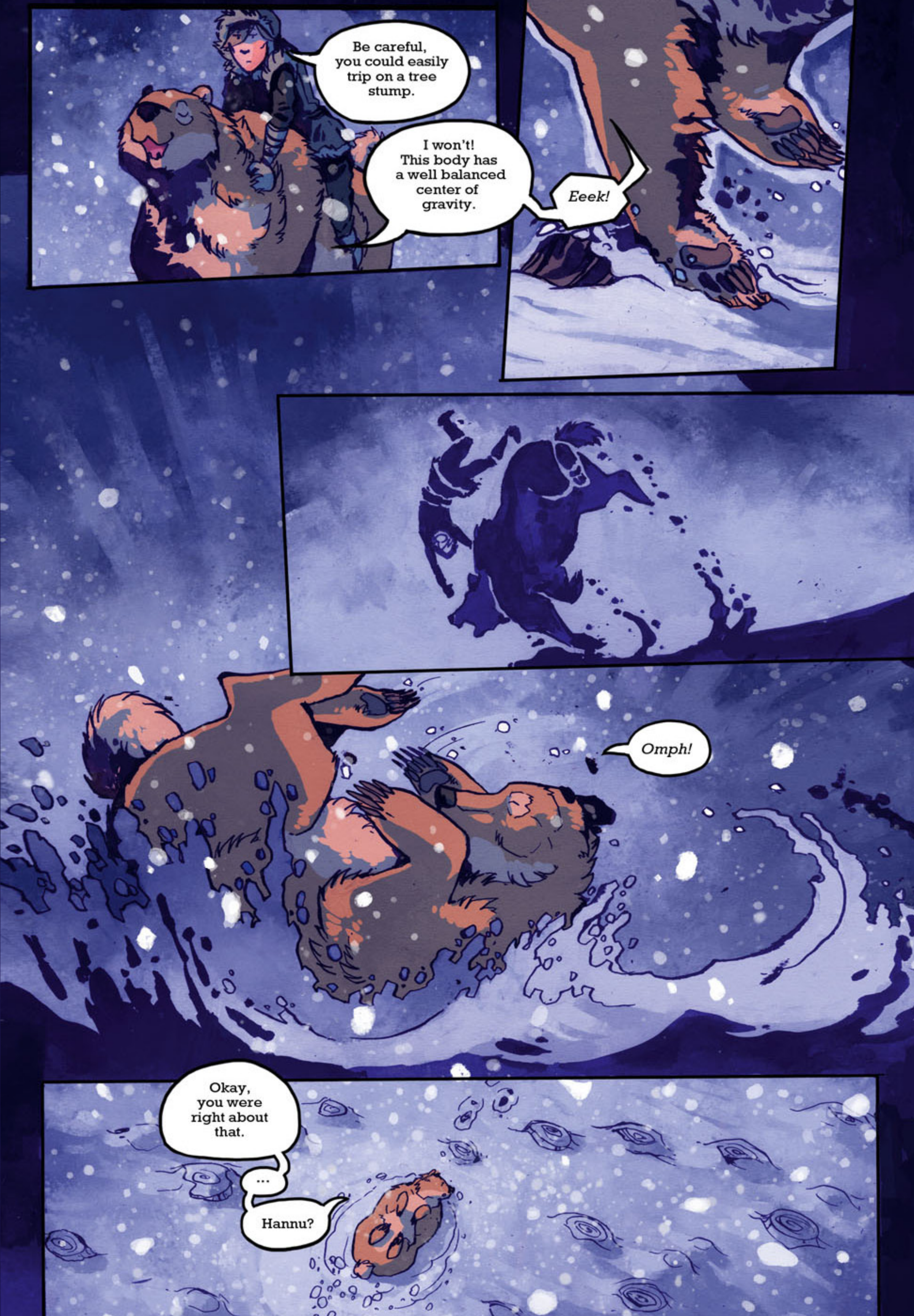

Whyyy?!!
I'm so sorry! You startled me!
Are you hurt?
Well, someone I love just punched me on the nose!
So *yes!*
I said I'm sorry, and I really mean it! *Please* don't cry!
Uugh, I hoped this had all just been an awful dream or something.
Well, techni-cally...
Yes, I know!
What did you even wake me up for?

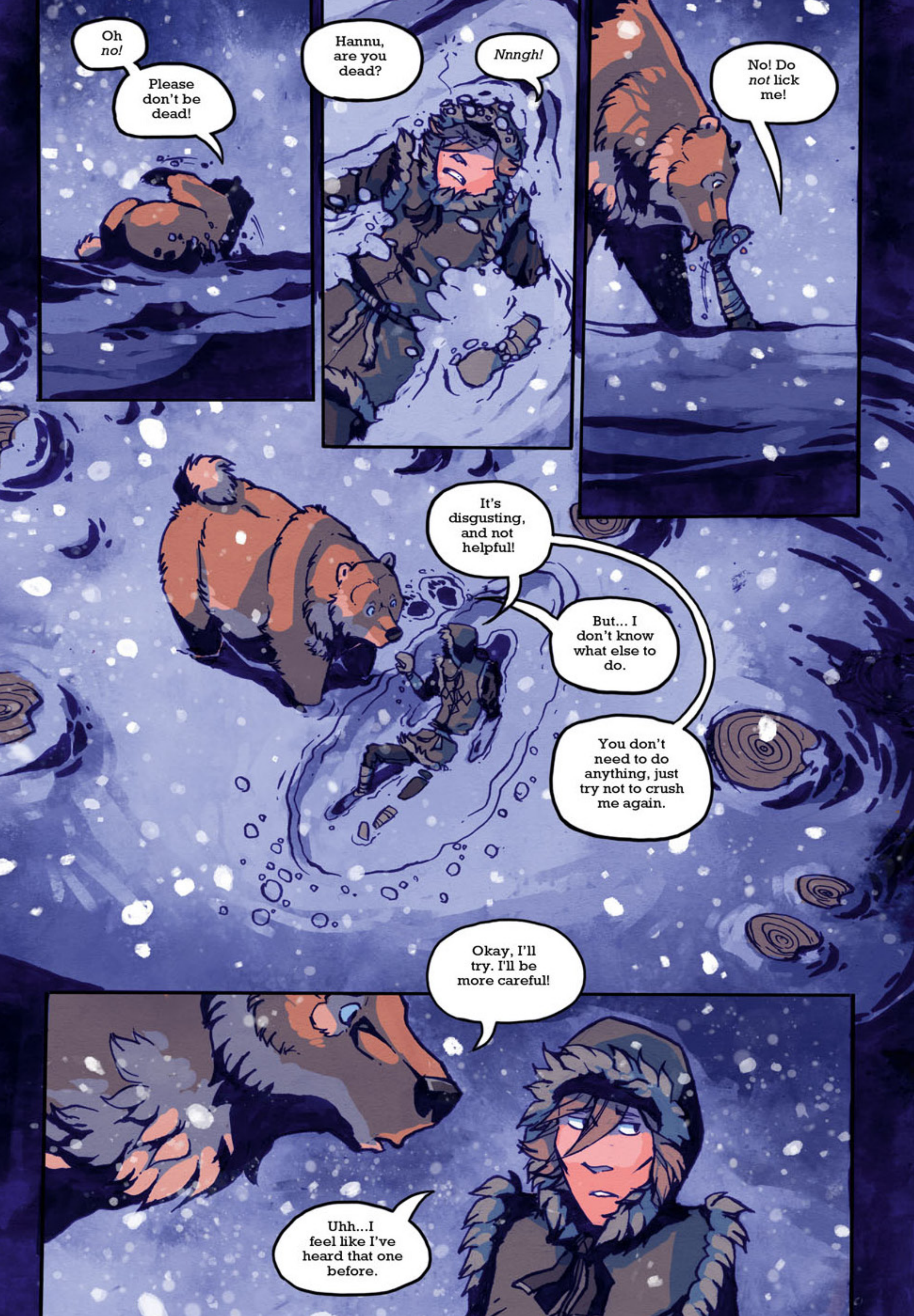

Oh, because of great news! Follow me!
I smell smoke in the wind!
Really? That means there has to be people around!
I know! Can you smell it too?
Umm.. no, nothing at all.
Oh... well, bears probably have a better sense of smell than humans.
You better have! Your nose is like ten times the size of mine. That would be a huge waste of nasal cavities otherwise.

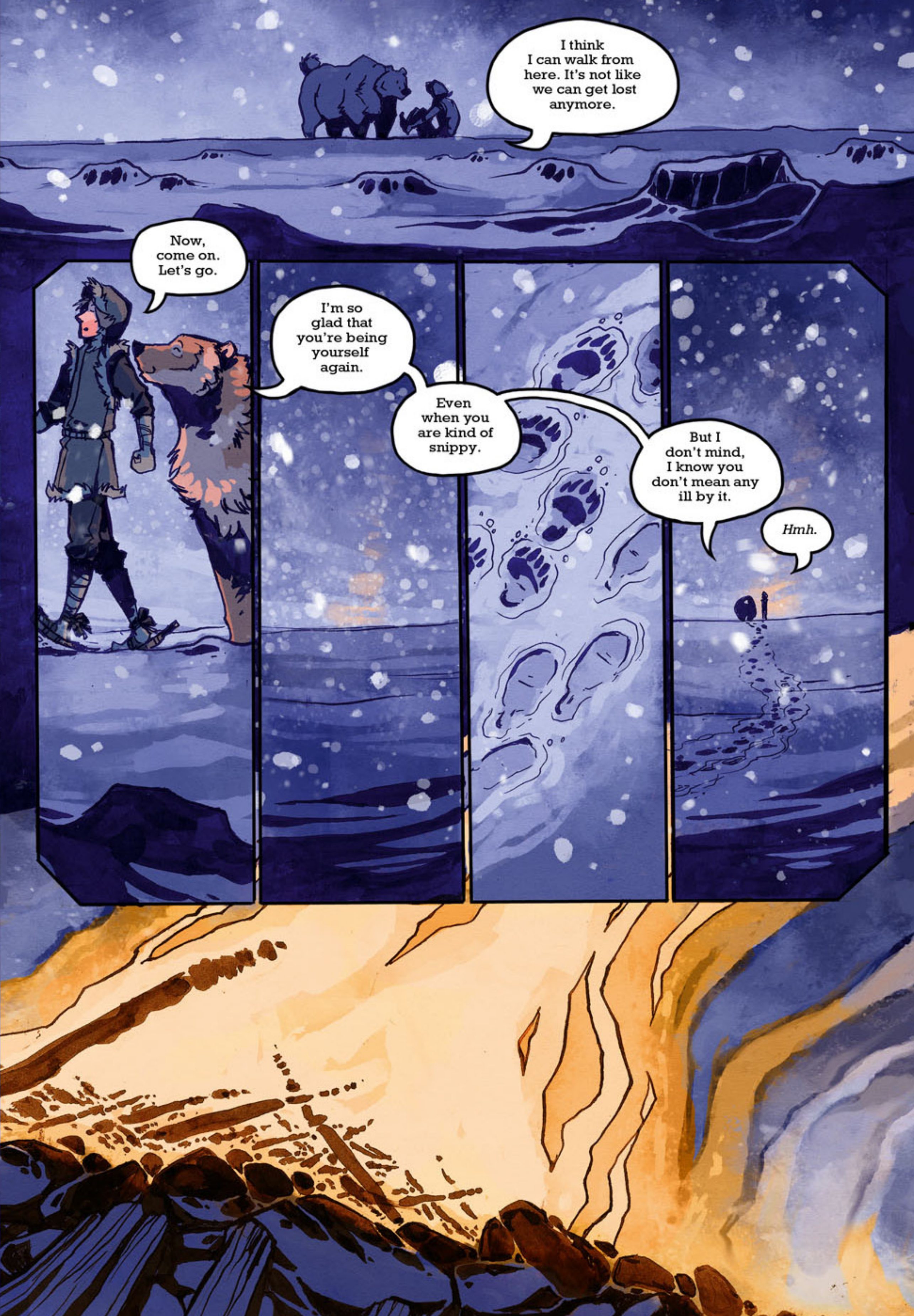

We have to be quick! If the wind turns again I'll lose track of the smell. Get on, I'll take us there really fast!
Uhh… fine.
I don't really know where to hold on to here.
Just grab a fistful of fur and hold tight! I'll barely feel it.
Don't fall off!
D-don't *throw* me off!

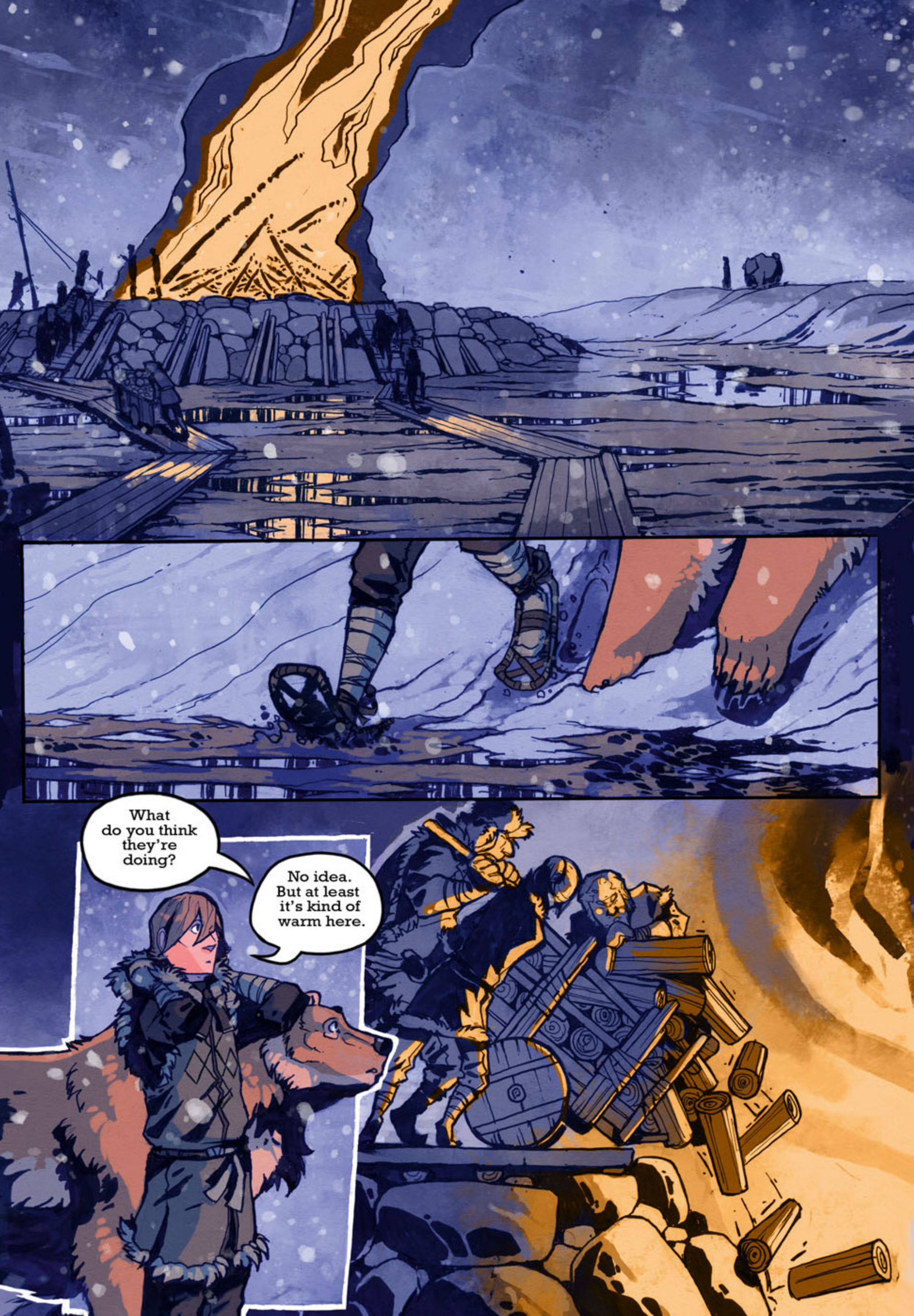

Are you feeling any better now that you've had some shut-eye?
I guess... I'm still kind of tired, and my head hurts, but I don't feel like I'm freezing to death anymore.
I really do wish I could have slept a bit longer. It was nice.
Did you have sweet dreams?
Oh no, no pesky dreams. Just complete and absolute darkness, and I didn't feel anything at all.
Really? I hate that kind of sleep, it's creepy.
It's the *best* kind of sleep there is!
It's like being dead or something.
That's why it's so creepy!
Agree to disagree, then...

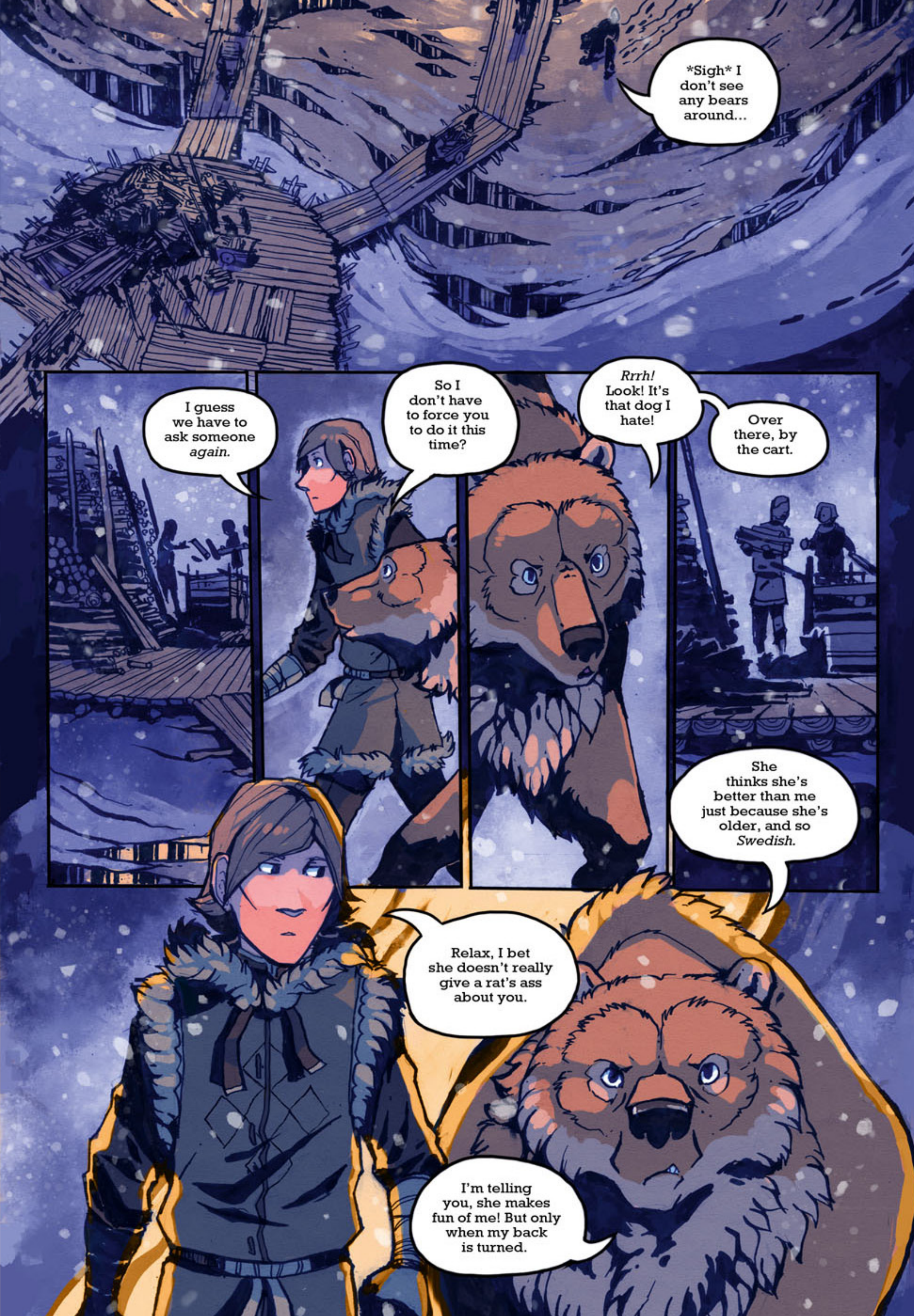

Looks like we're approaching... something.

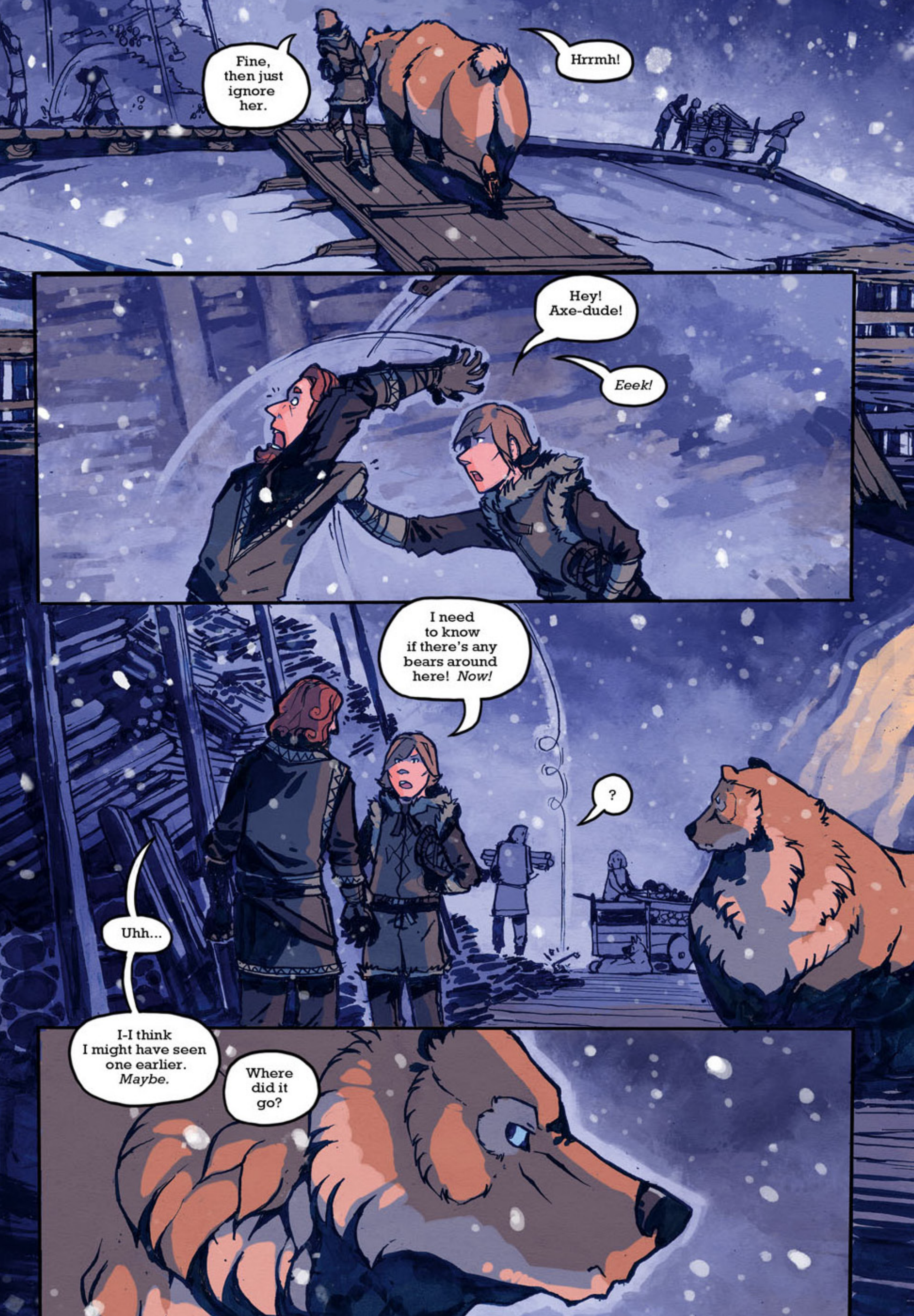

Be careful, you could easily trip on a tree stump.
I won't! This body has a well balanced center of gravity.
Eeek!
Omph!
Okay, you were right about that.
...
Hannu?

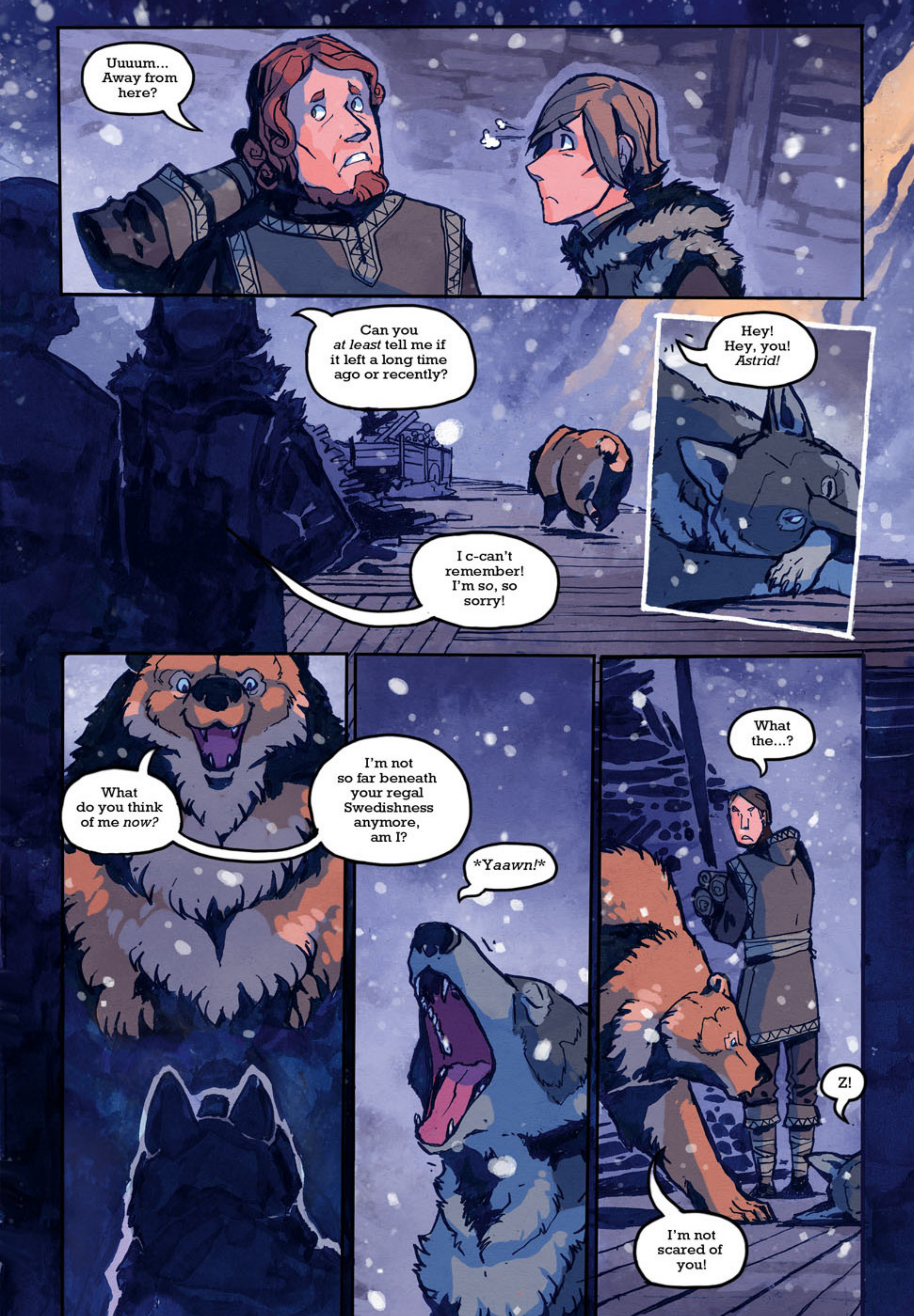

Oh *no!*
Please don't be dead!
Hannu, are you dead?
Nnngh!
No! Do *not* lick me!
It's disgusting, and not helpful!
But... I don't know what else to do.
You don't need to do anything, just try not to crush me again.
Okay, I'll try. I'll be more careful!
Uhh...I feel like I've heard that one before.

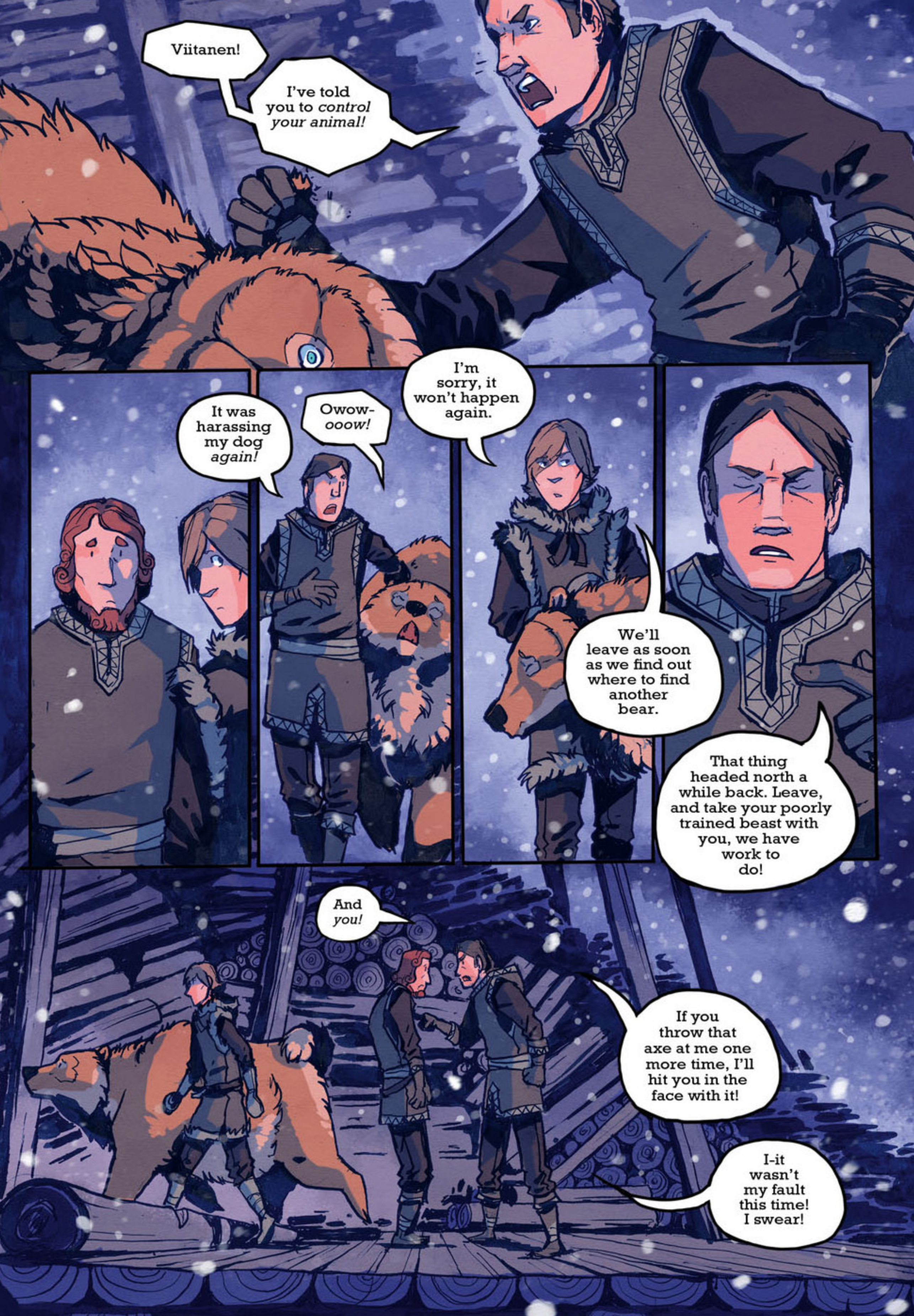

I think I can walk from here. It's not like we can get lost anymore.
Now, come on. Let's go.
I'm so glad that you're being yourself again.
Even when you are kind of snippy.
But I don't mind, I know you don't mean any ill by it.
Hmh.

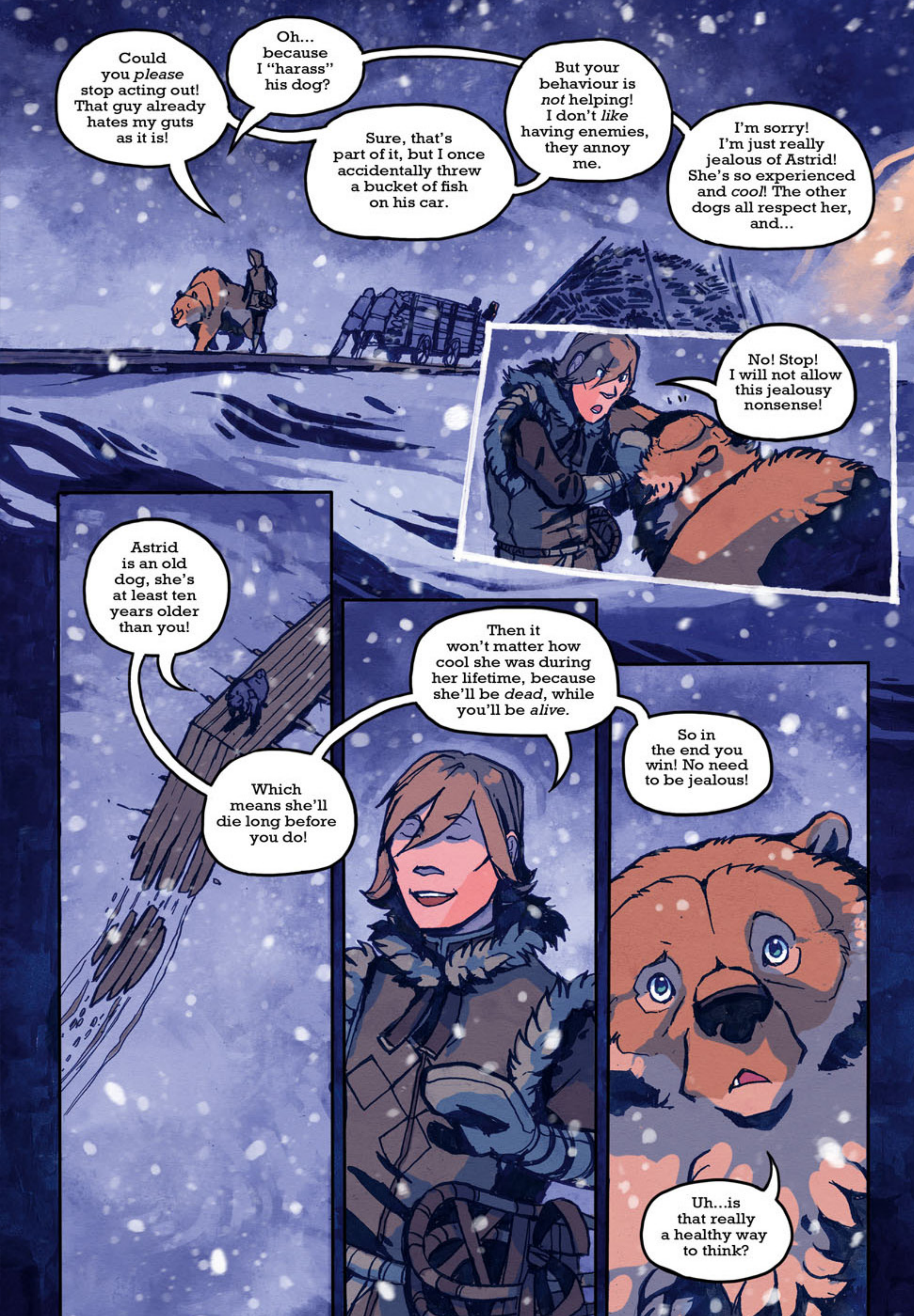

What do you think they're doing?
No idea. But at least it's kind of warm here.

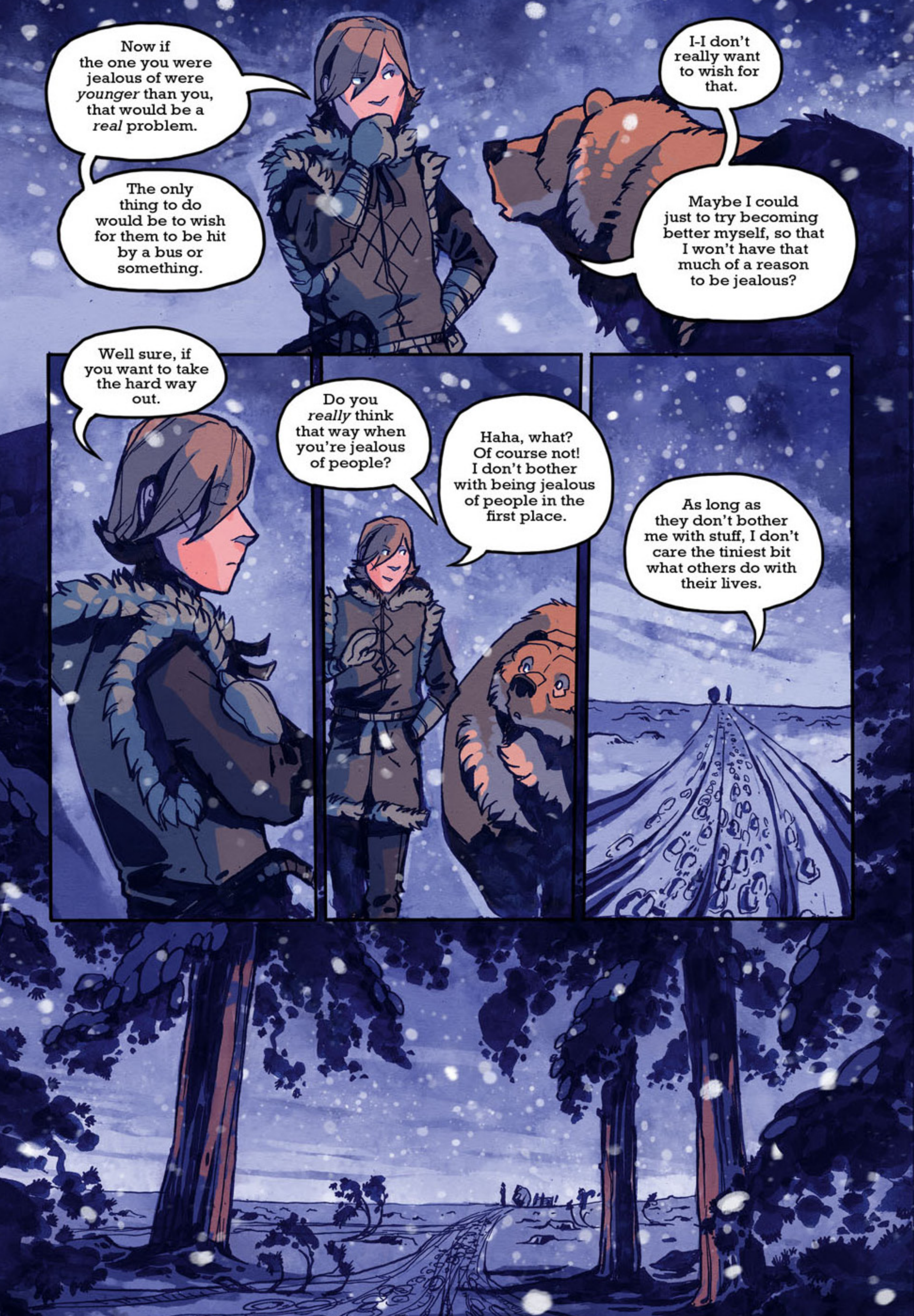

Sigh I don't see any bears around...
I guess we have to ask someone *again.*
So I don't have to force you to do it this time?
Rrrh! Look! It's that dog I hate!
Over there, by the cart.
She thinks she's better than me just because she's older, and so *Swedish.*
Relax, I bet she doesn't really give a rat's ass about you.
I'm telling you, she makes fun of me! But only when my back is turned.

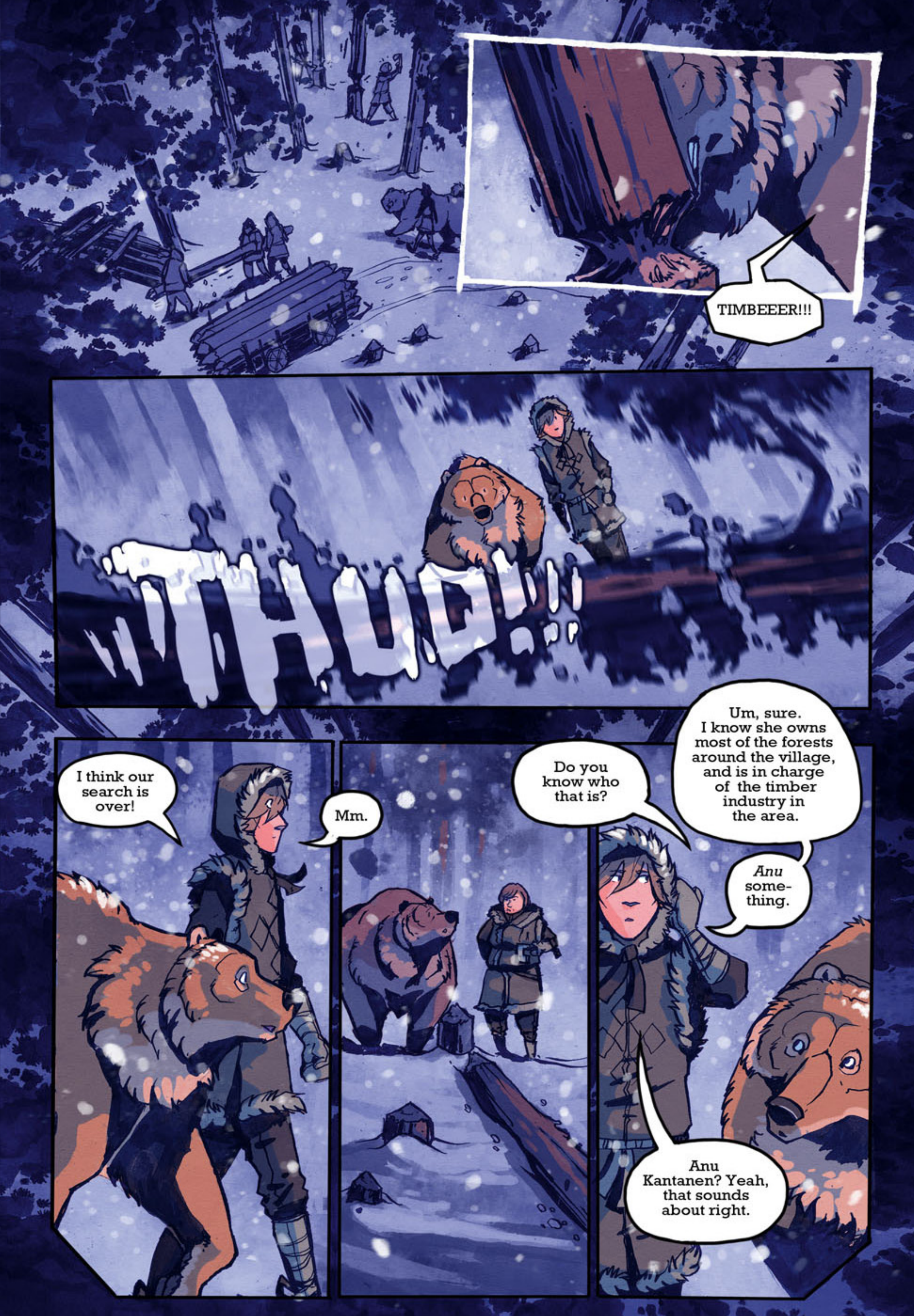

Fine, then just ignore her.
Hrrmh!
Hey! Axe-dude!
Eeek!
I need to know if there's any bears around here! *Now!*
?
Uhh...
I-I think I might have seen one earlier. *Maybe.*
Where did it go?

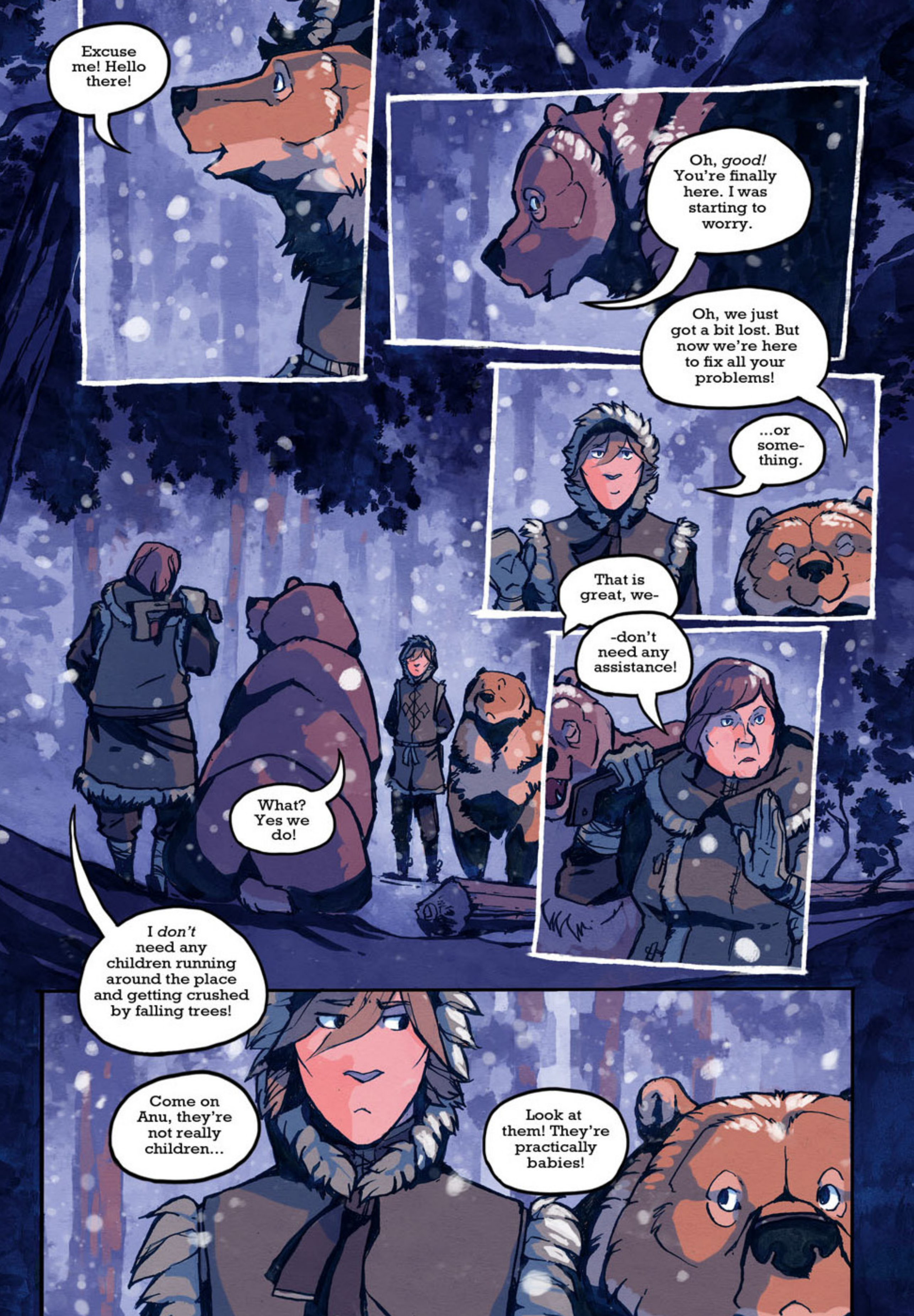

Uuuum... Away from here?
Can you *at least* tell me if it left a long time ago or recently?
I c-can't remember! I'm *so*, so sorry!
Hey! Hey, you! *Astrid!*
What do you think of me *now?*
I'm not so far beneath your regal Swedishness anymore, am I?
*Y*aawn!*
What the...?
Z!
I'm not scared of you!

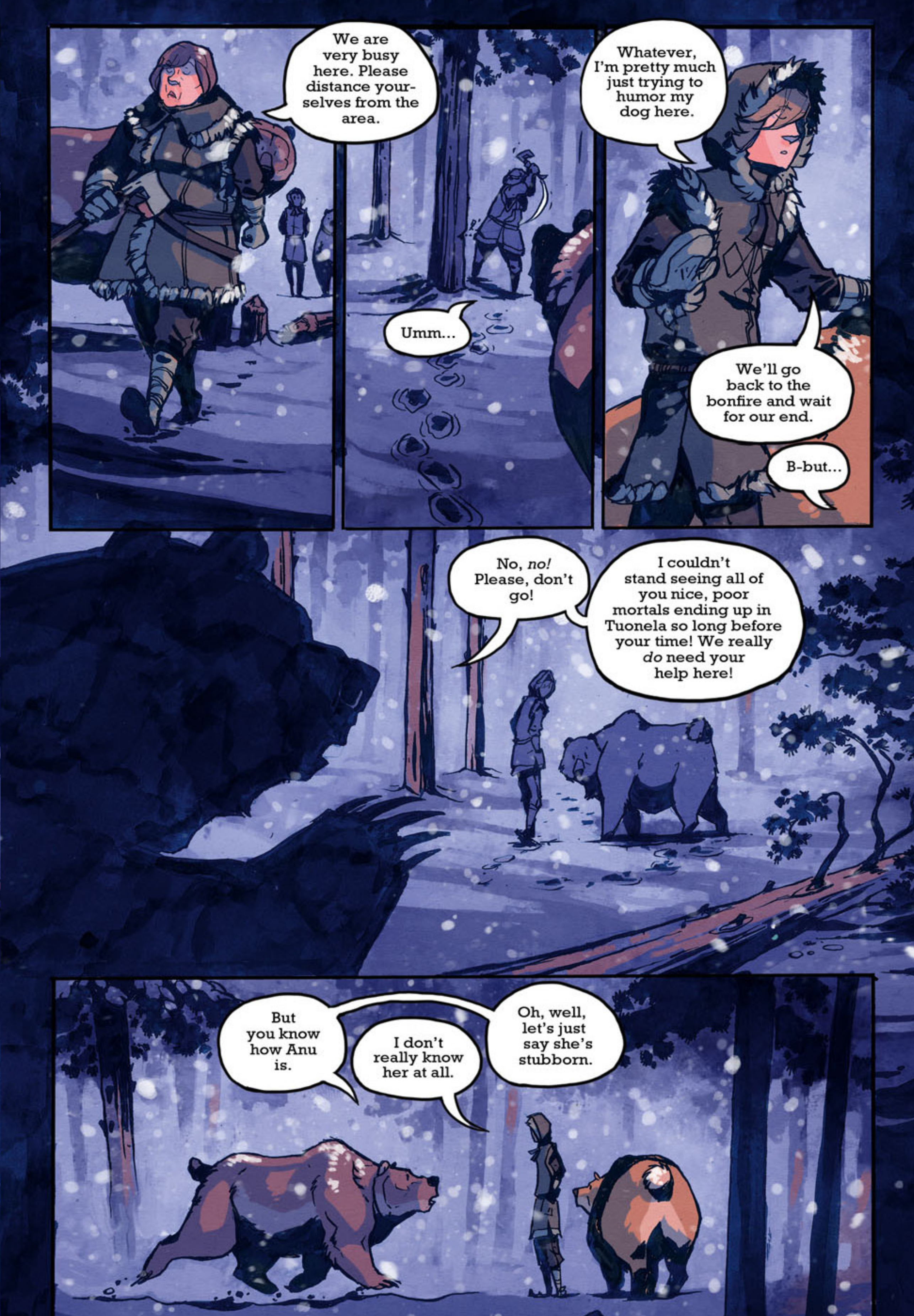

Viitanen!
I've told you to *control your animal!*
It was harassing my dog *again!*
Owow-*ooow!*
I'm sorry, it won't happen again.
We'll leave as soon as we find out where to find another bear.
That thing headed north a while back. Leave, and take your poorly trained beast with you, we have work to do!
And *you!*
If you throw that axe at me one more time, I'll hit you in the face with it!
I-it wasn't my fault this time! I swear!

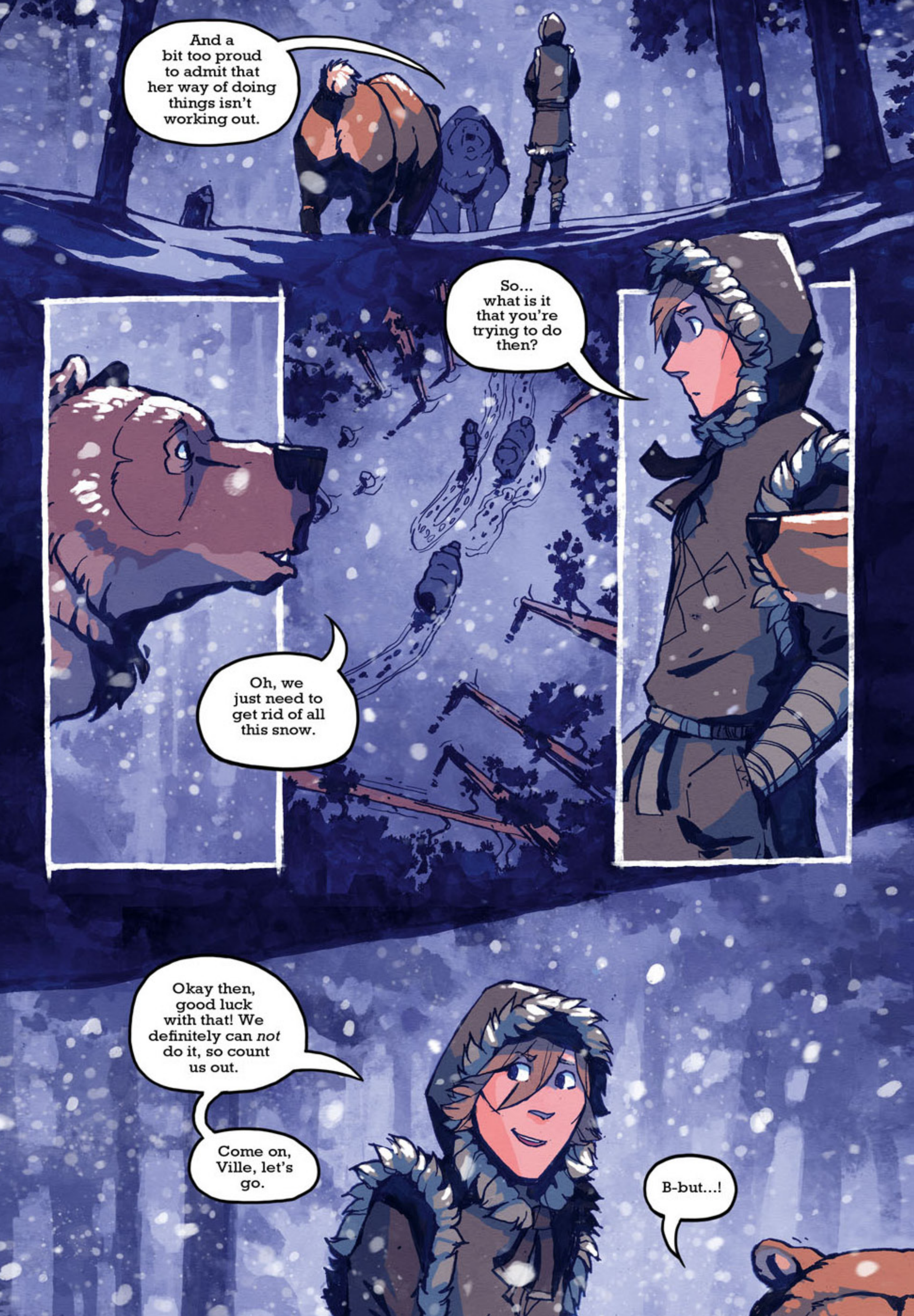

Could you *please* stop acting out! That guy already hates my guts as it is!
Oh... because I "harass" his dog?
Sure, that's part of it, but I once accidentally threw a bucket of fish on his car.
But your behaviour is *not* helping! I don't *like* having enemies, they annoy me.
I'm sorry! I'm just really jealous of Astrid! She's so experienced and *cool*! The other dogs all respect her, and...
No! Stop! I will not allow this jealousy nonsense!
Astrid is an old dog, she's at least ten years older than you!
Which means she'll die long before you do!
Then it won't matter how cool she was during her lifetime, because she'll be *dead*, while you'll be *alive*.
So in the end you win! No need to be jealous!
Uh...is that really a healthy way to think?

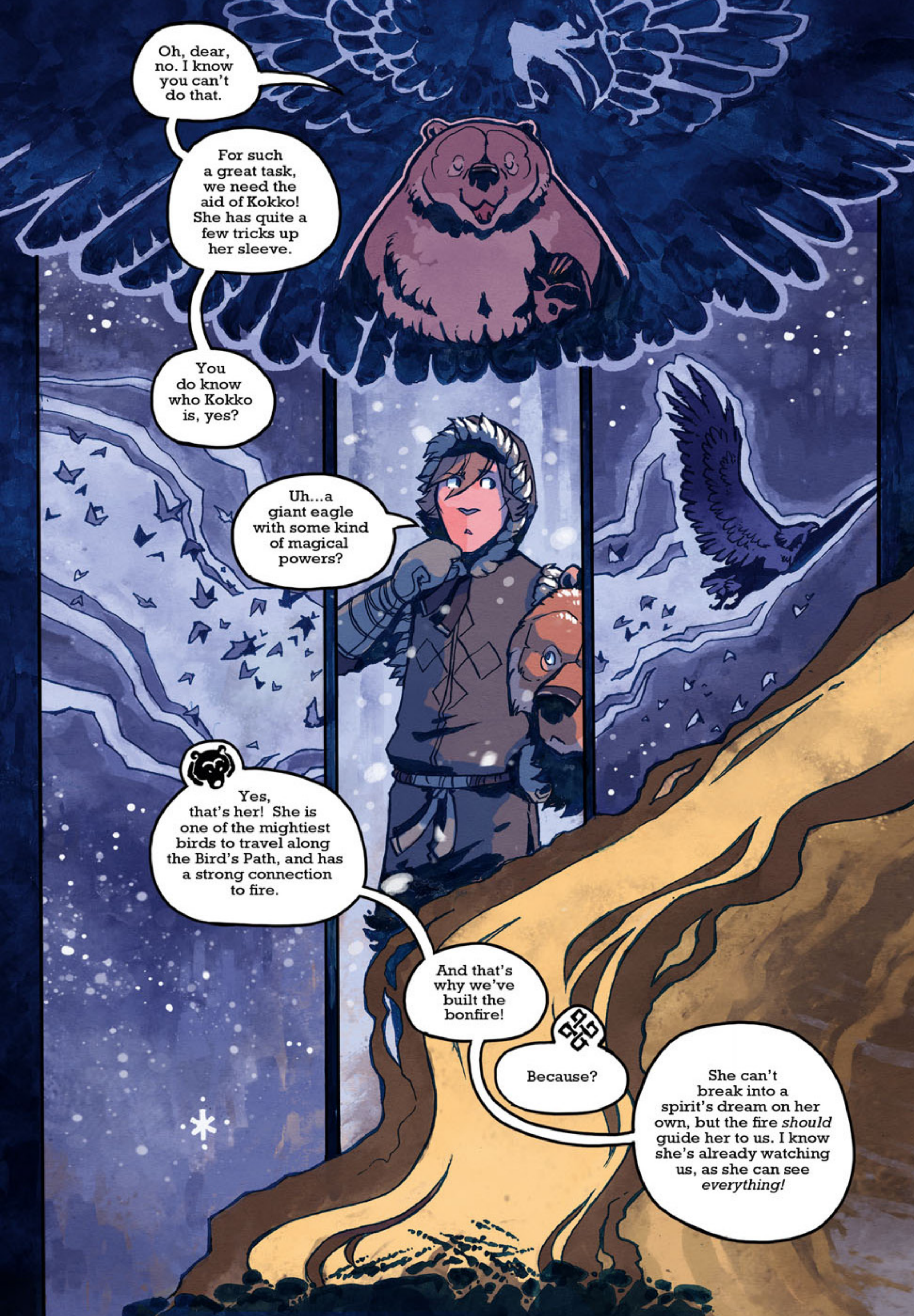

Now if the one you were jealous of were *younger* than you, that would be a *real* problem.
The only thing to do would be to wish for them to be hit by a bus or something.
I-I don't really want to wish for that.
Maybe I could just to try becoming better myself, so that I won't have that much of a reason to be jealous?
Well sure, if you want to take the hard way out.
Do you *really* think that way when you're jealous of people?
Haha, what? Of course not! I don't bother with being jealous of people in the first place.
As long as they don't bother me with stuff, I don't care the tiniest bit what others do with their lives.

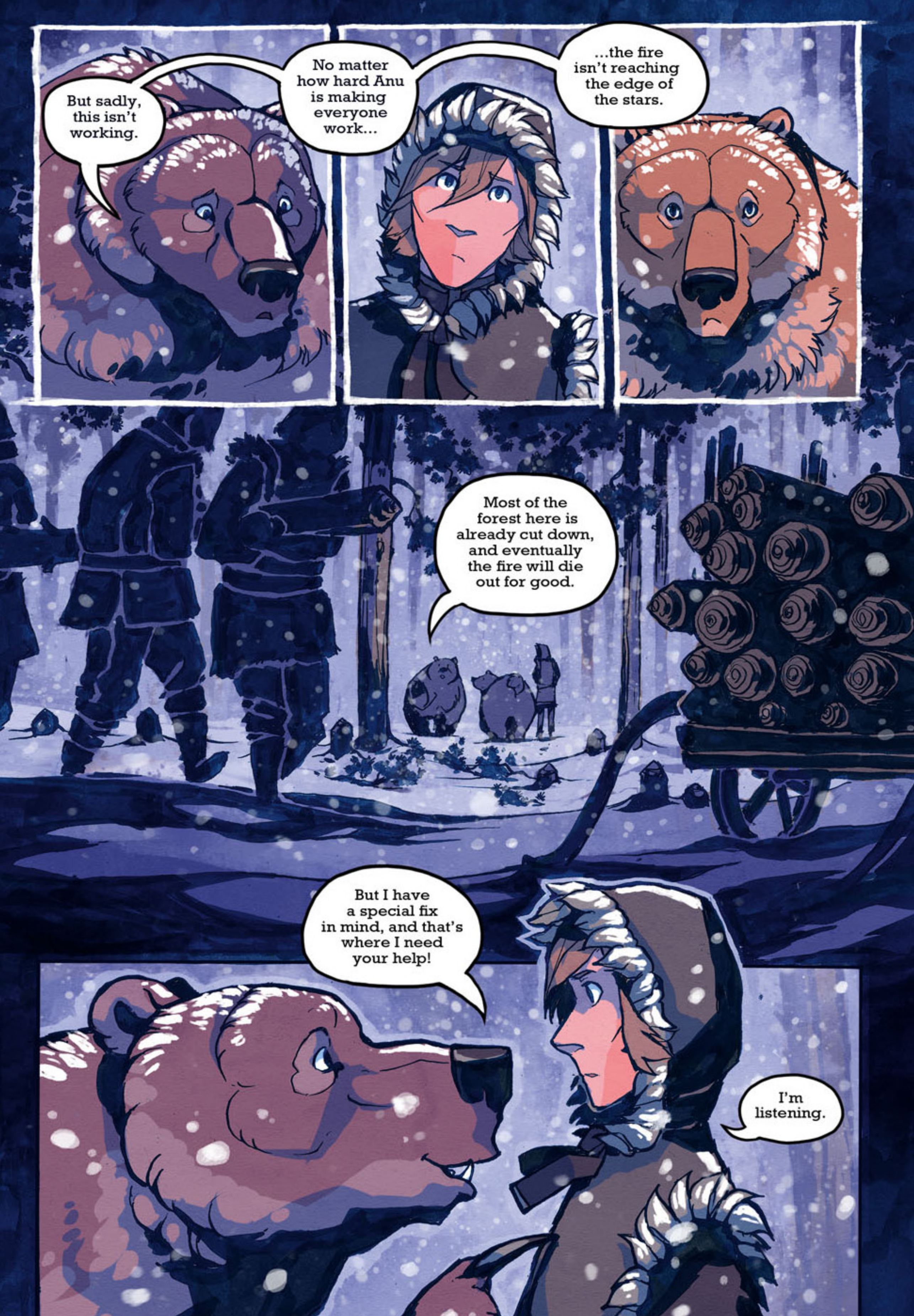

TIMBEEER!!!
THUD!!!
I think our search is over!
Mm.
Do you know who that is?
Um, sure. I know she owns most of the forests around the village, and is in charge of the timber industry in the area.
Anu something.
Anu Kantanen? Yeah, that sounds about right.

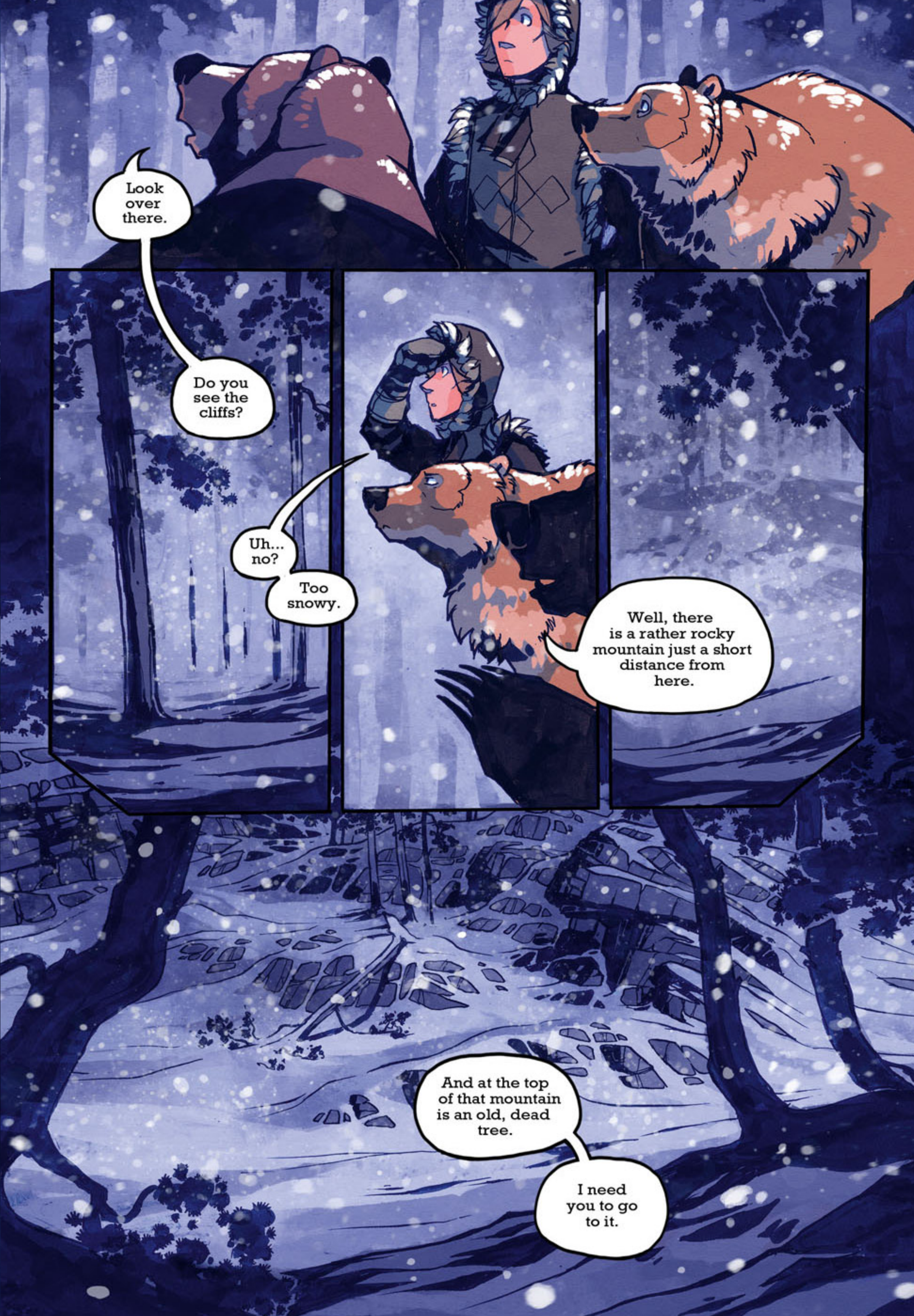

Excuse me! Hello there!
Oh, *good!* You're finally here. I was starting to worry.
Oh, we just got a bit lost. But now we're here to fix all your problems!
...or something.
That is great, we-
-don't need any assistance!
What? Yes we do!
I *don't* need any children running around the place and getting crushed by falling trees!
Come on Anu, they're not really children...
Look at them! They're practically babies!

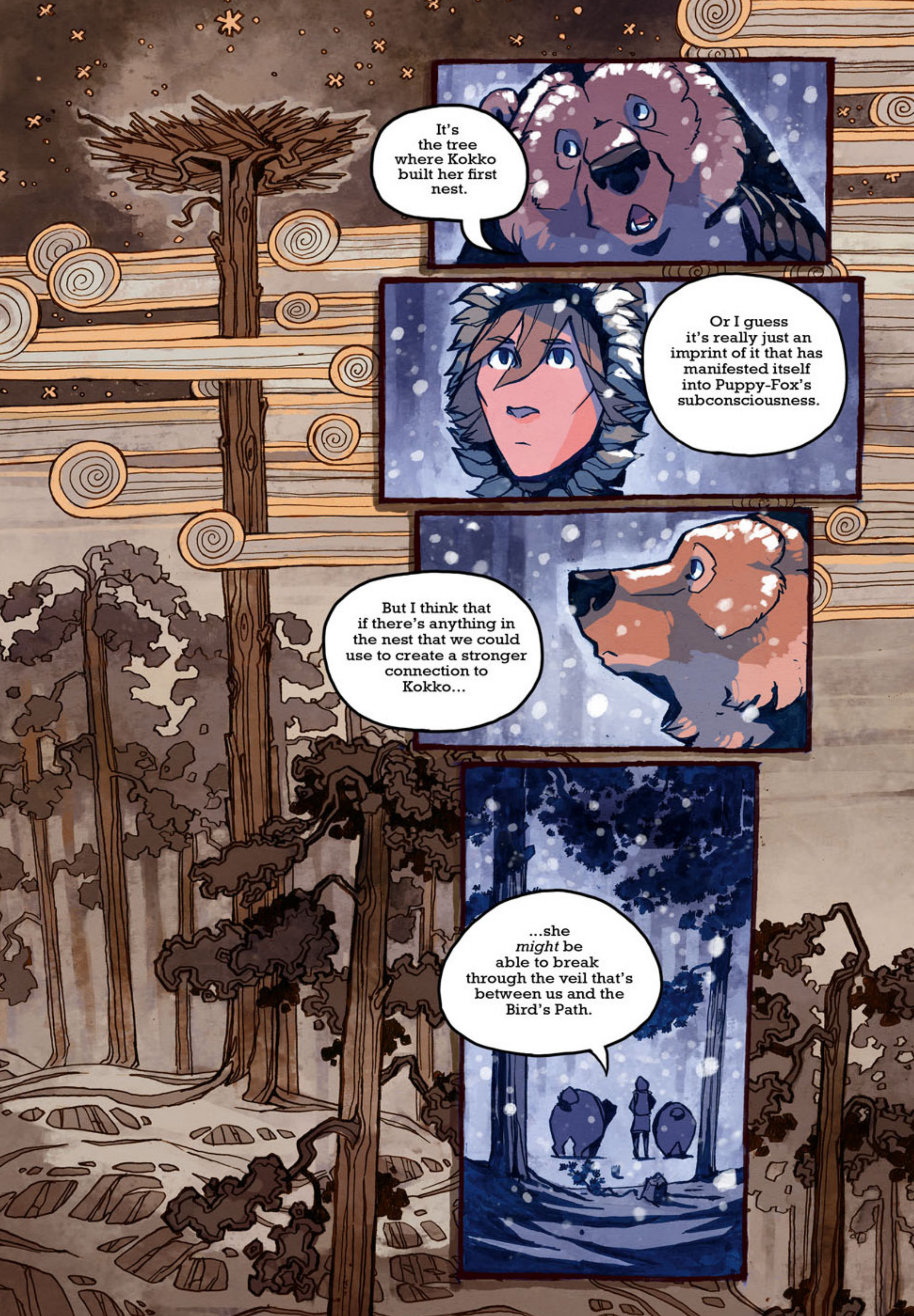

We are very busy here. Please distance yourselves from the area.
Umm…
Whatever, I'm pretty much just trying to humor my dog here.
We'll go back to the bonfire and wait for our end.
B-but…
No, *no!* Please, don't go!
I couldn't stand seeing all of you nice, poor mortals ending up in Tuonela so long before your time! We really *do* need your help here!
But you know how Anu is.
I don't really know her at all.
Oh, well, let's just say she's stubborn.

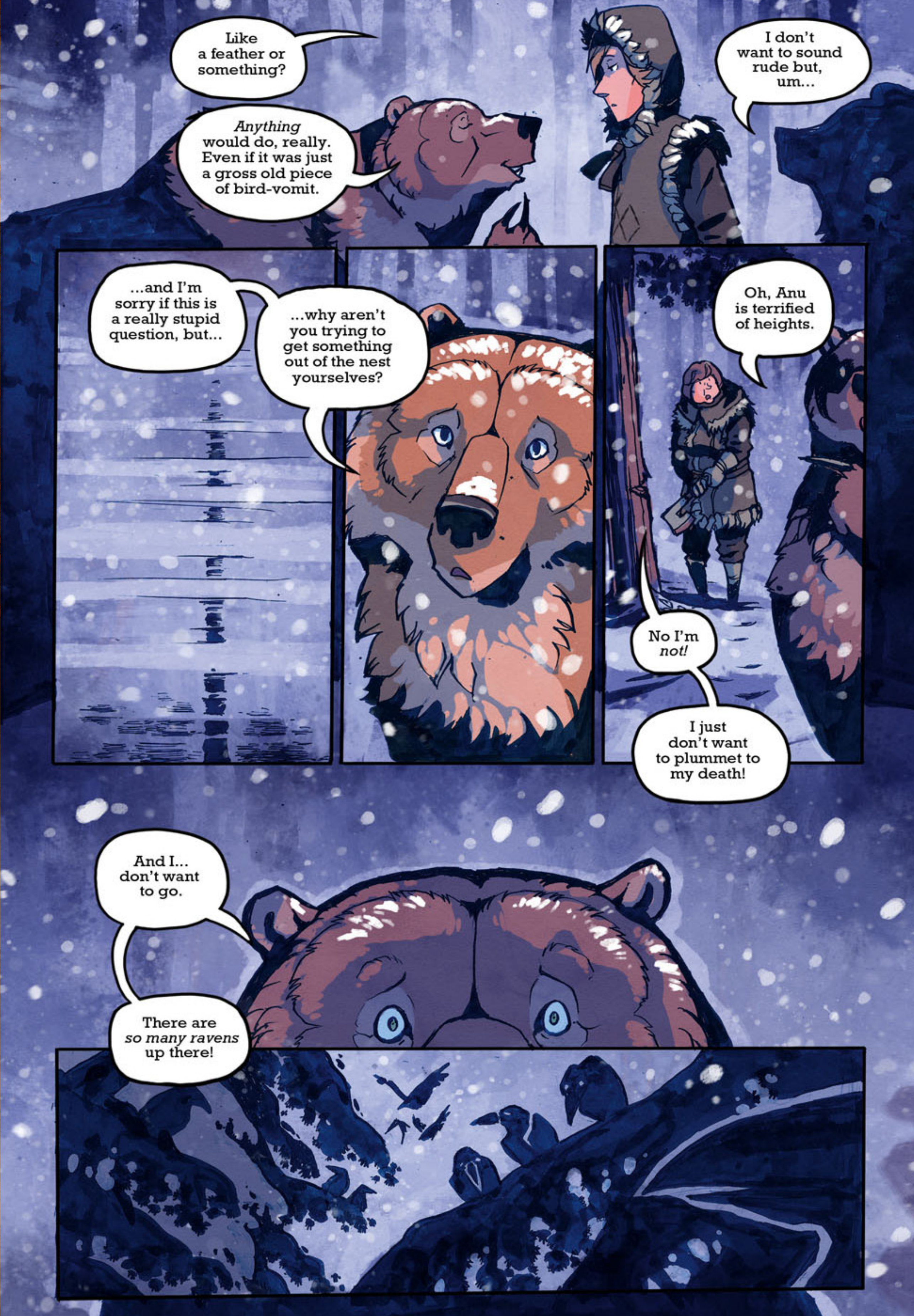

And a bit too proud to admit that her way of doing things isn't working out.
So... what is it that you're trying to do then?
Oh, we just need to get rid of all this snow.
Okay then, good luck with that! We definitely can *not* do it, so count us out.
Come on, Ville, let's go.
B-but...!

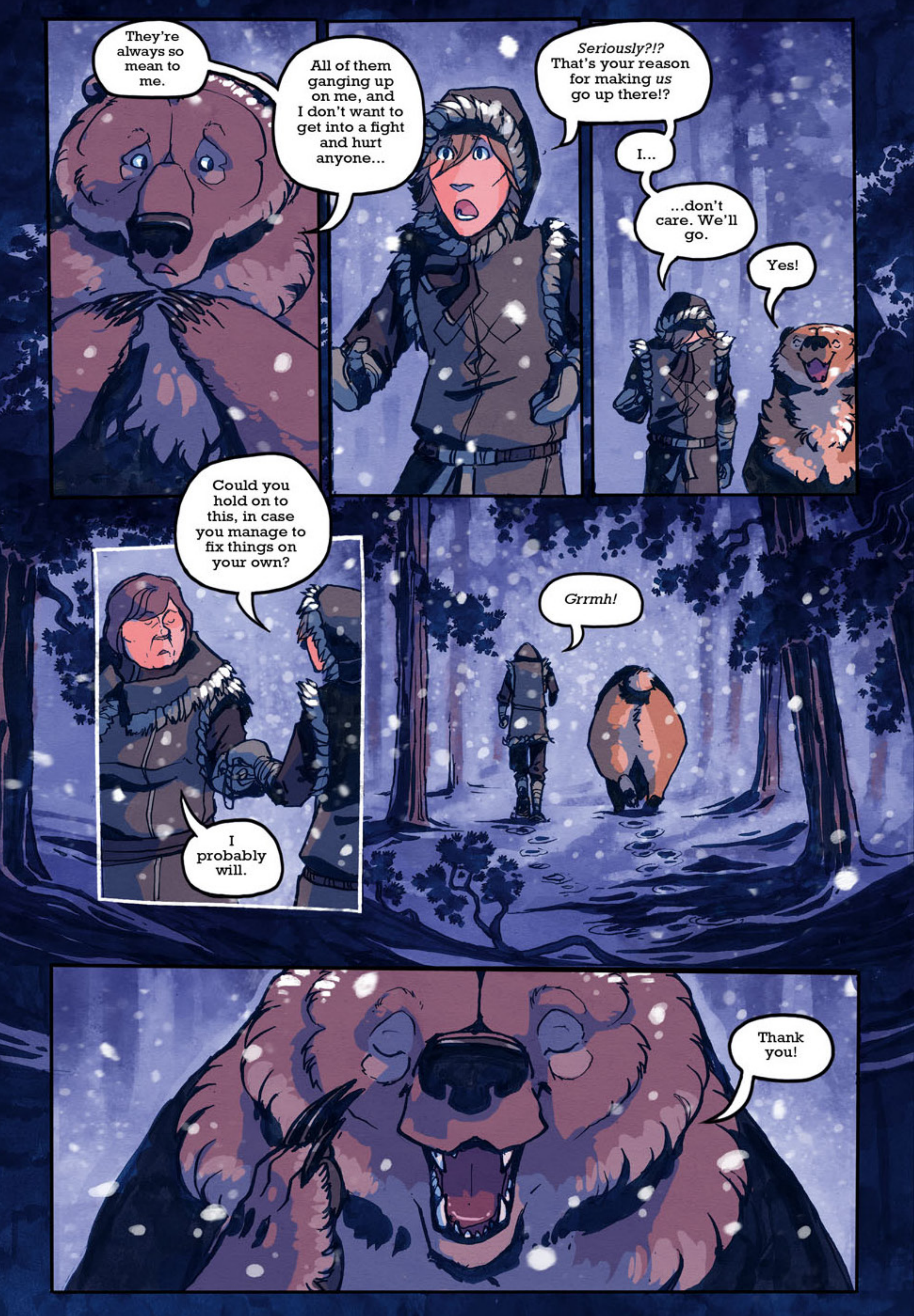

Oh, dear, no. I know you can't do that.
For such a great task, we need the aid of Kokko! She has quite a few tricks up her sleeve.
You do know who Kokko is, yes?
Uh...a giant eagle with some kind of magical powers?
Yes, that's her! She is one of the mightiest birds to travel along the Bird's Path, and has a strong connection to fire.
And that's why we've built the bonfire!
Because?
She can't break into a spirit's dream on her own, but the fire *should* guide her to us. I know she's already watching us, as she can see *everything!*

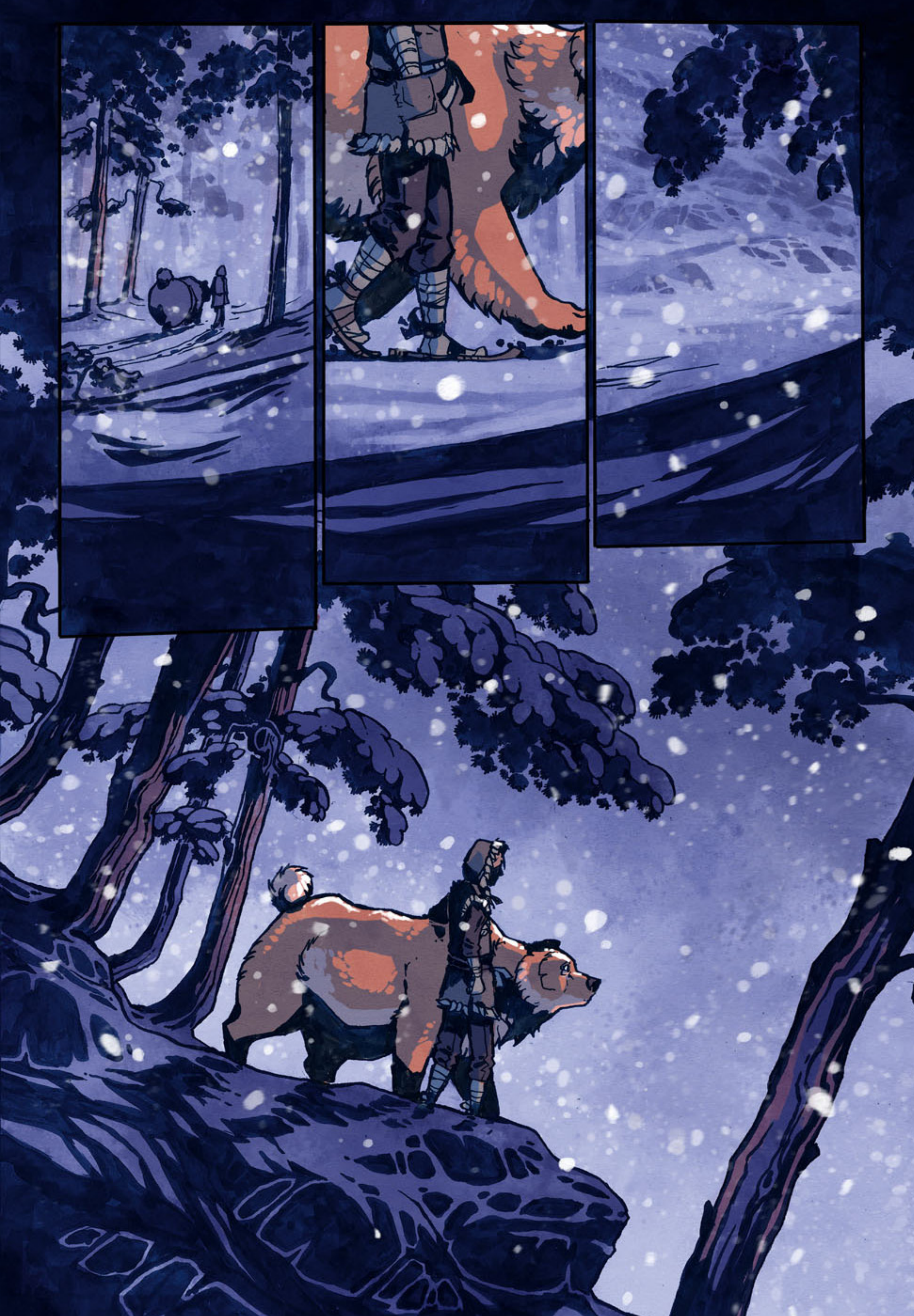

But sadly, this isn't working.
No matter how hard Anu is making everyone work...
...the fire isn't reaching the edge of the stars.
Most of the forest here is already cut down, and eventually the fire will die out for good.
But I have a special fix in mind, and that's where I need your help!
I'm listening.

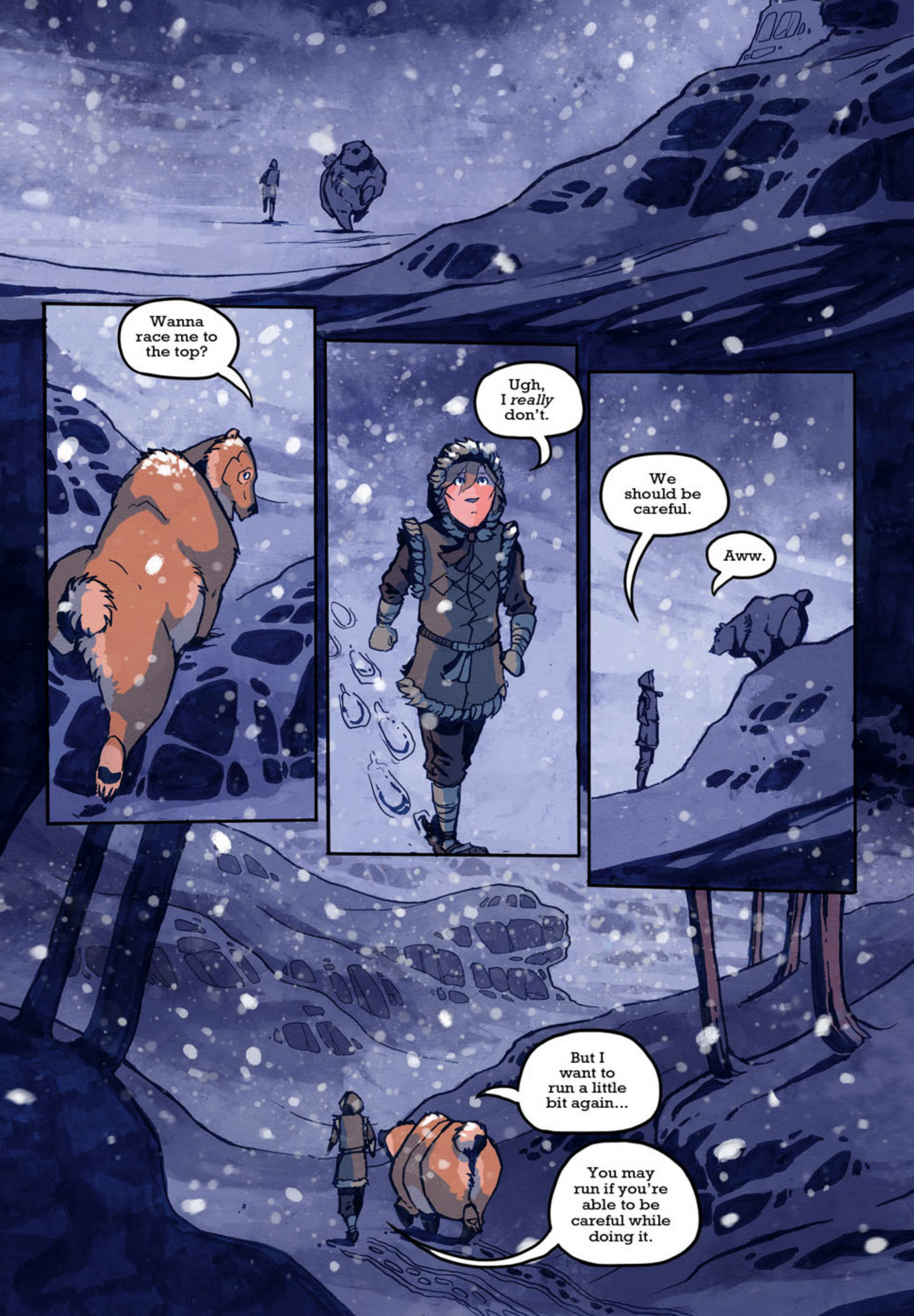

Look over there.
Do you see the cliffs?
Uh... no?
Too snowy.
Well, there is a rather rocky mountain just a short distance from here.
And at the top of that mountain is an old, dead tree.
I need you to go to it.

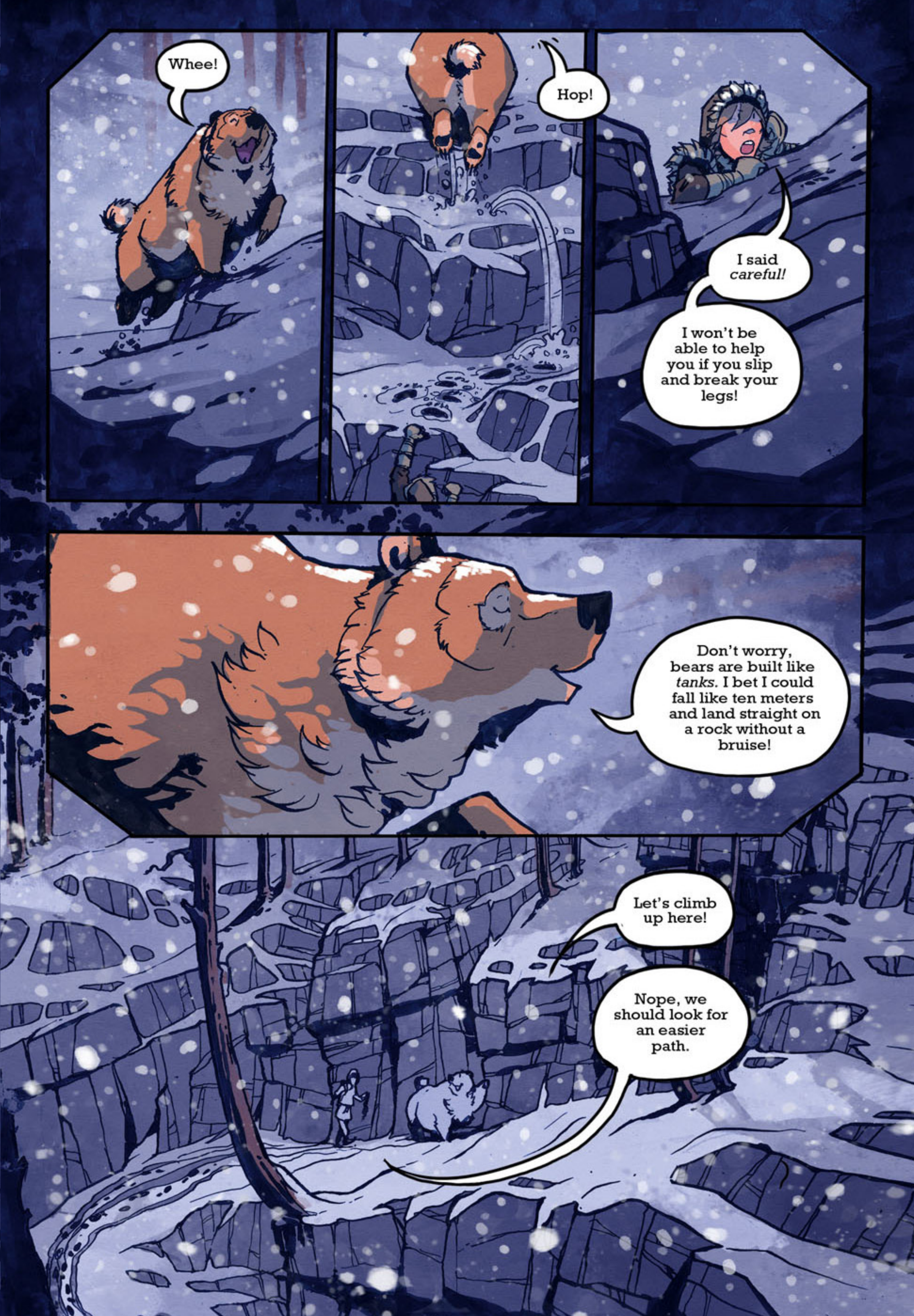

It's the tree where Kokko built her first nest.
Or I guess it's really just an imprint of it that has manifested itself into Puppy-Fox's subconsciousness.
But I think that if there's anything in the nest that we could use to create a stronger connection to Kokko...
...she *might* be able to break through the veil that's between us and the Bird's Path.

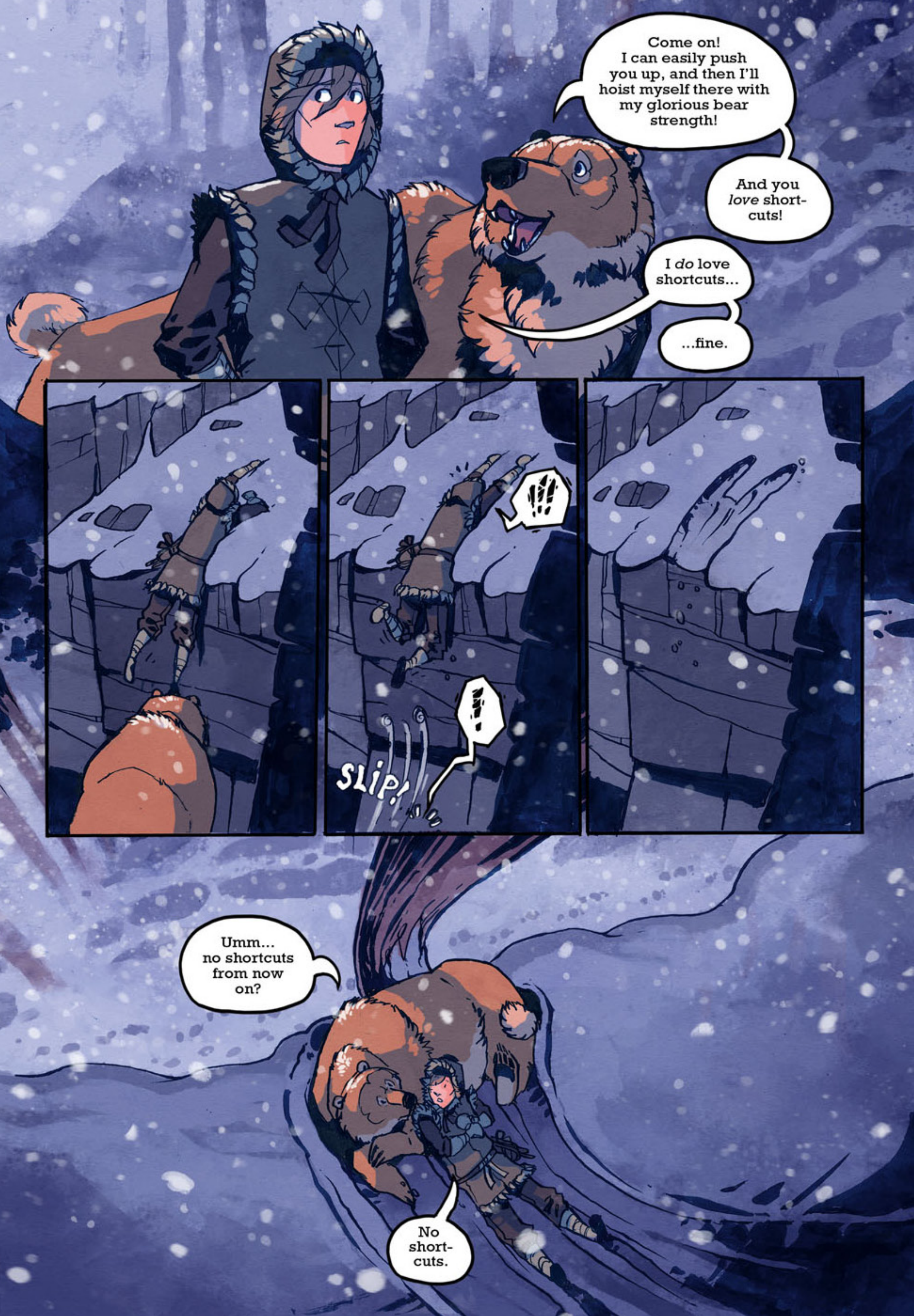

Like a feather or something?
I don't want to sound rude but, um...
Anything would do, really. Even if it was just a gross old piece of bird-vomit.
...and I'm sorry if this is a really stupid question, but...
...why aren't you trying to get something out of the nest yourselves?
Oh, Anu is terrified of heights.
No I'm *not!*
I just don't want to plummet to my death!
And I... don't want to go.
There are *so many ravens* up there!

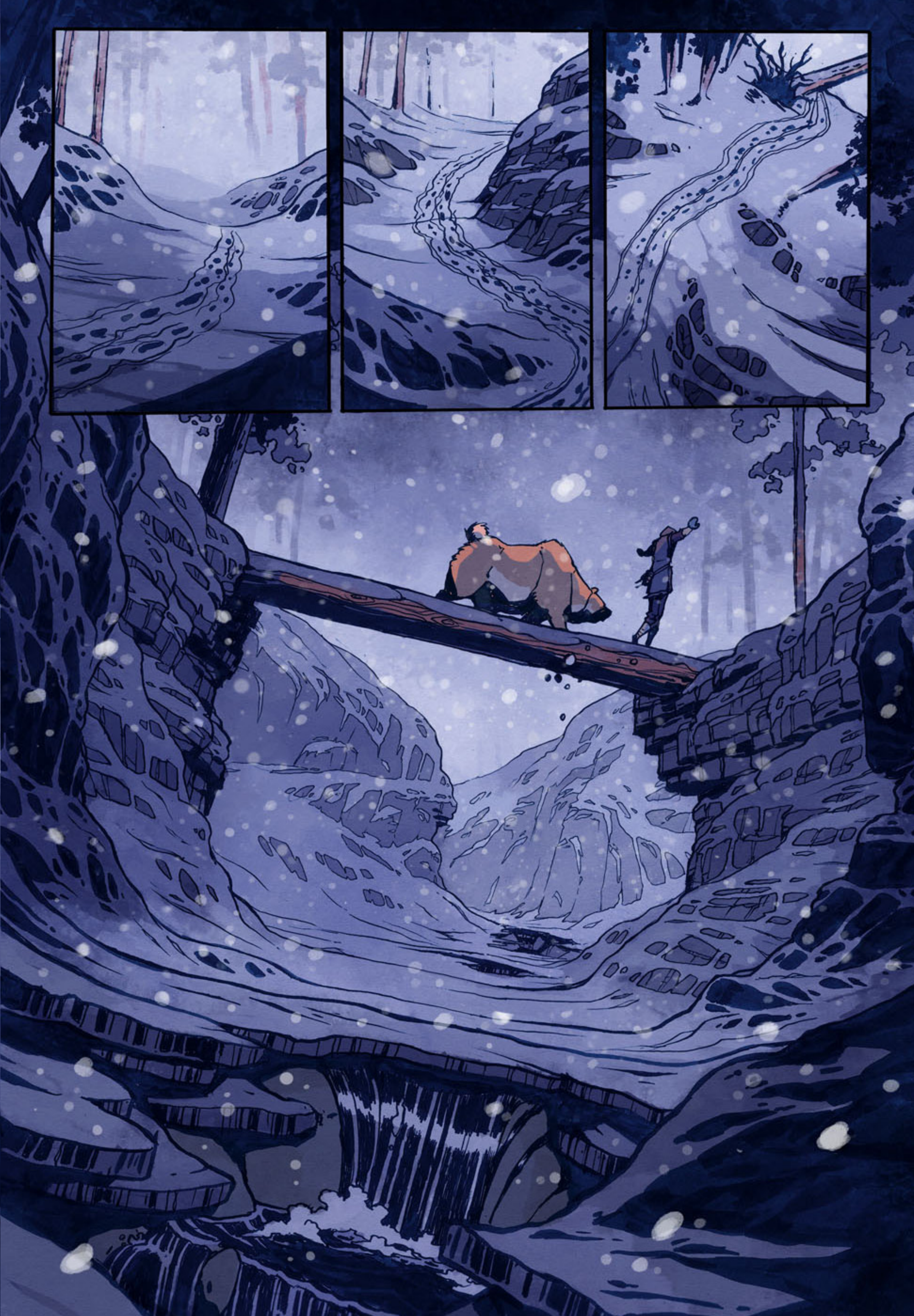

They're always so mean to me.
All of them ganging up on me, and I don't want to get into a fight and hurt anyone...
Seriously?!? That's your reason for making *us* go up there!?
I...
...don't care. We'll go.
Yes!
Could you hold on to this, in case you manage to fix things on your own?
I probably will.
Grrmh!
Thank you!

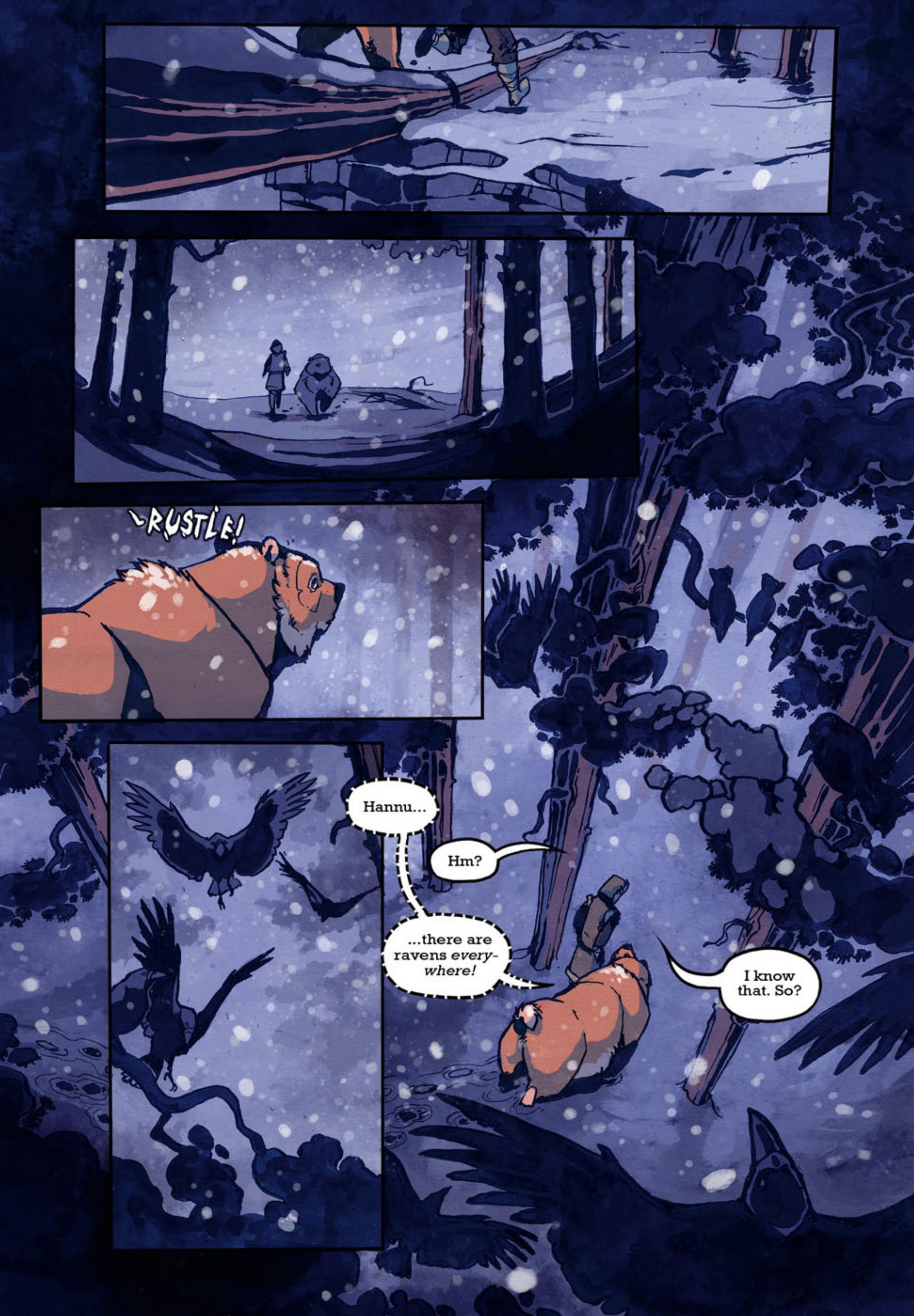


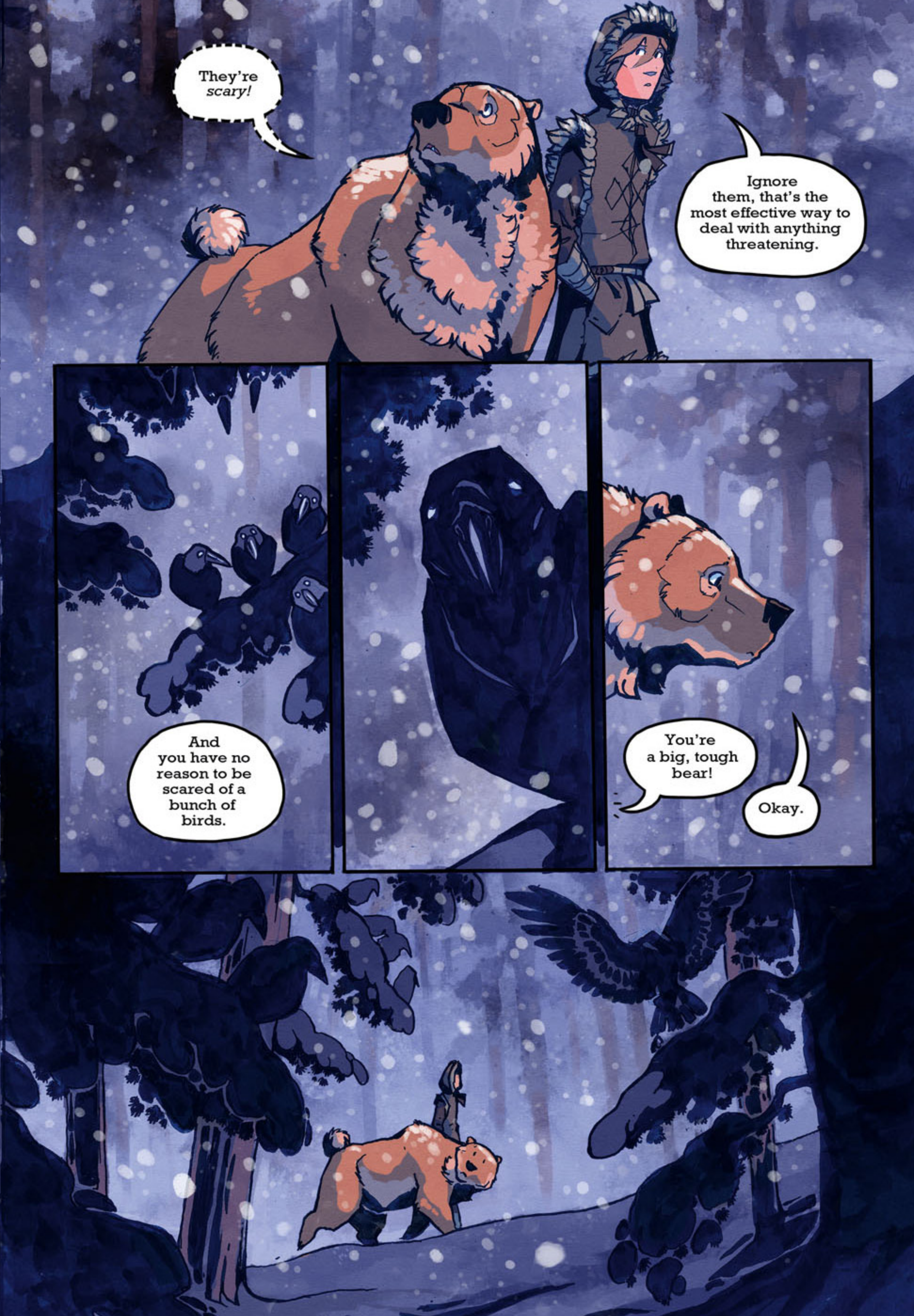

Wanna race me to the top?
Ugh, I *really* don't.
We should be careful.
Aww.
But I want to run a little bit again...
You may run if you're able to be careful while doing it.

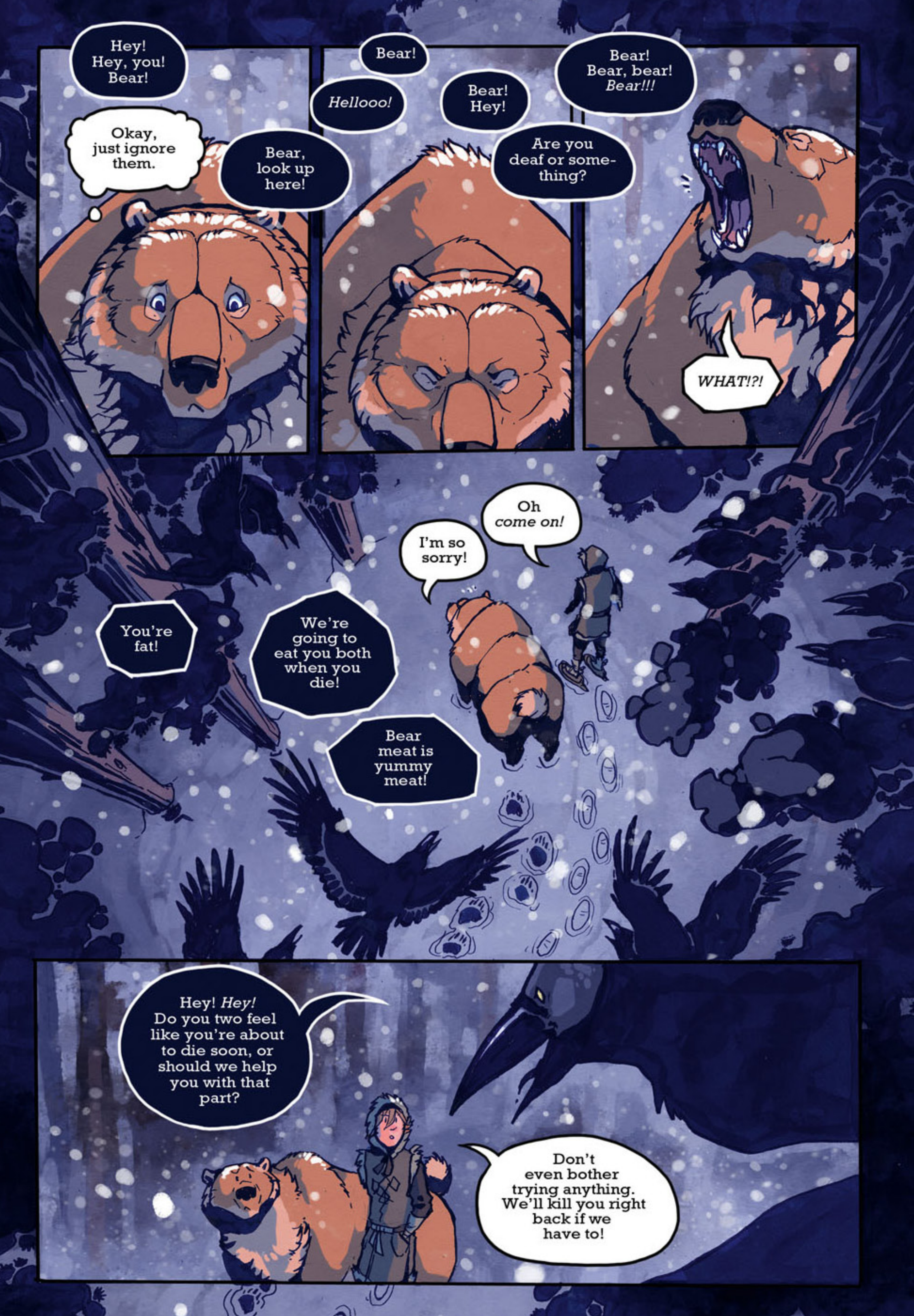

Whee!
Hop!
I said *careful!*
I won't be able to help you if you slip and break your legs!
Don't worry, bears are built like *tanks.* I bet I could fall like ten meters and land straight on a rock without a bruise!
Let's climb up here!
Nope, we should look for an easier path.

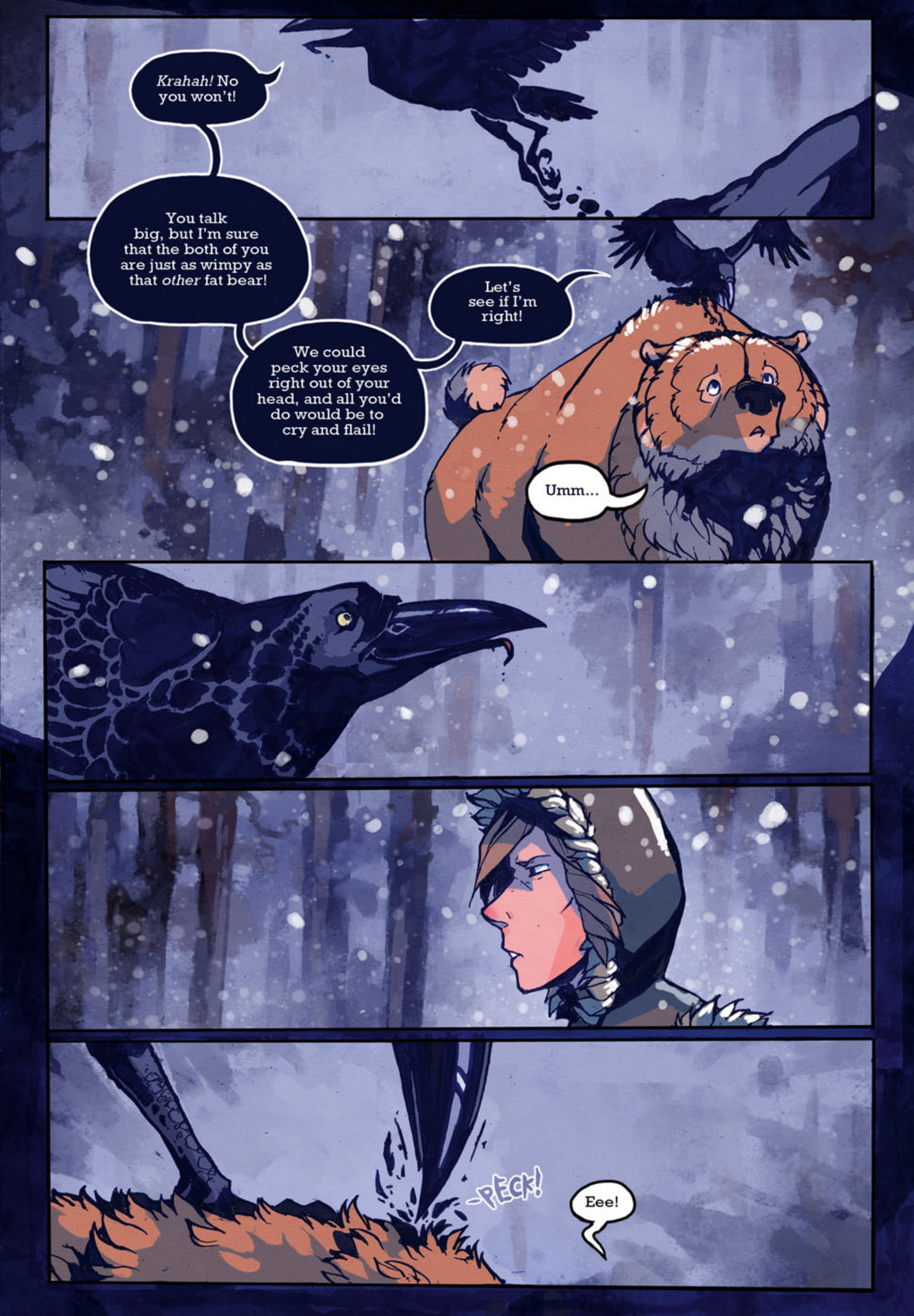

Come on! I can easily push you up, and then I'll hoist myself there with my glorious bear strength!
And you *love* shortcuts!
I *do* love shortcuts...
...fine.
!!!
!
SLIP!
Umm... no shortcuts from now on?
No shortcuts.

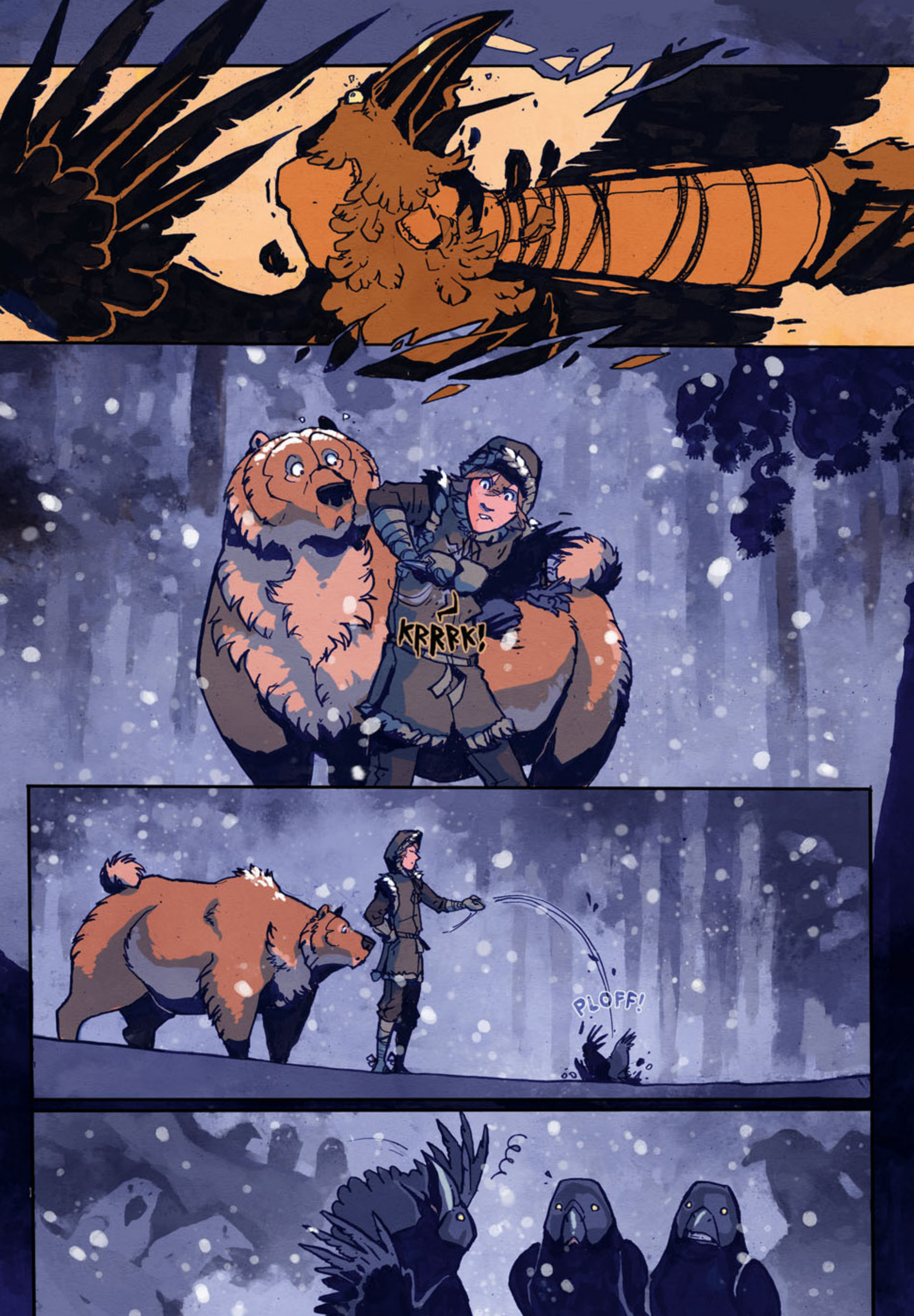


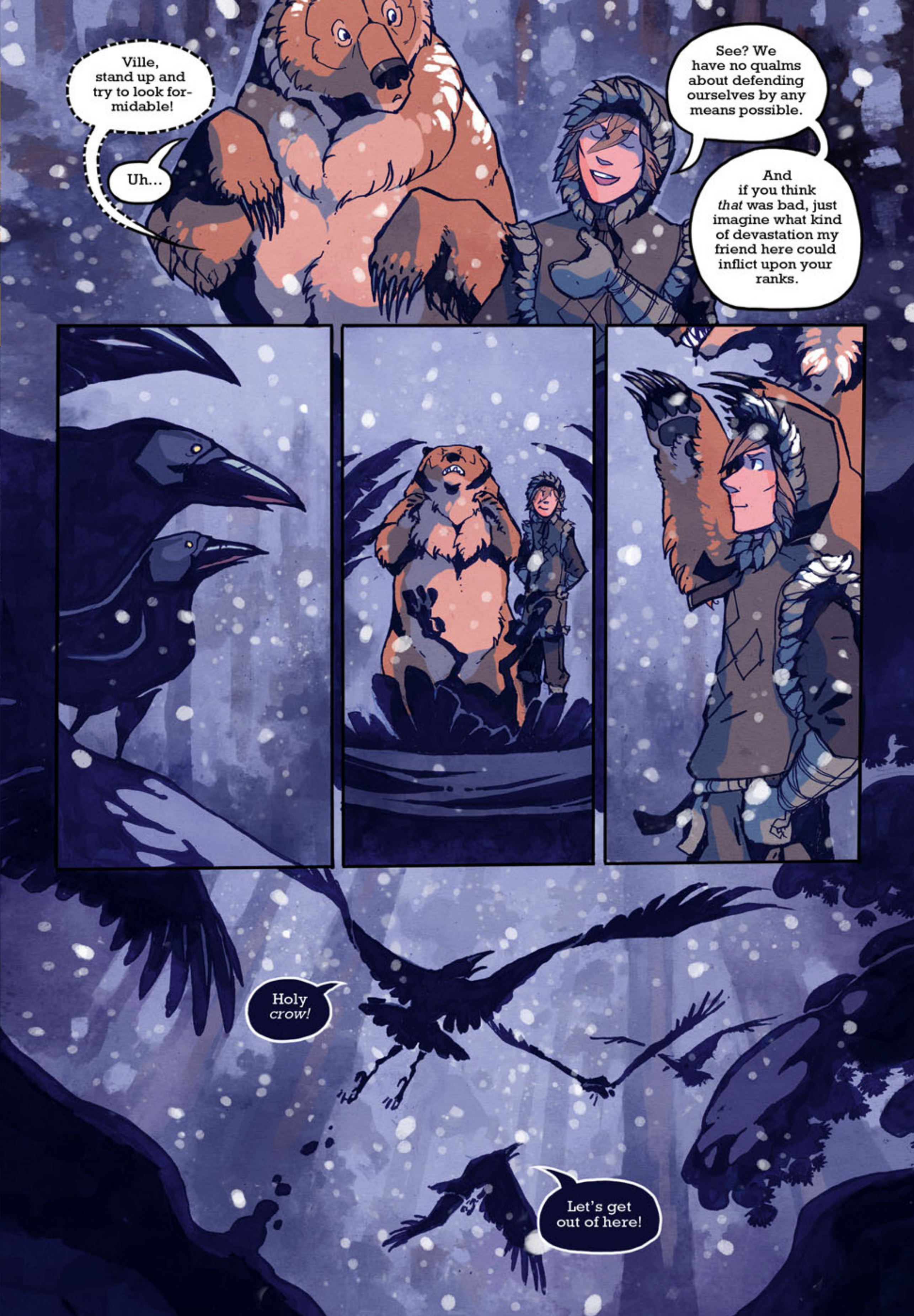

RUSTLE!
Hannu...
Hm?
...there are ravens *everywhere!*
I know that. So?

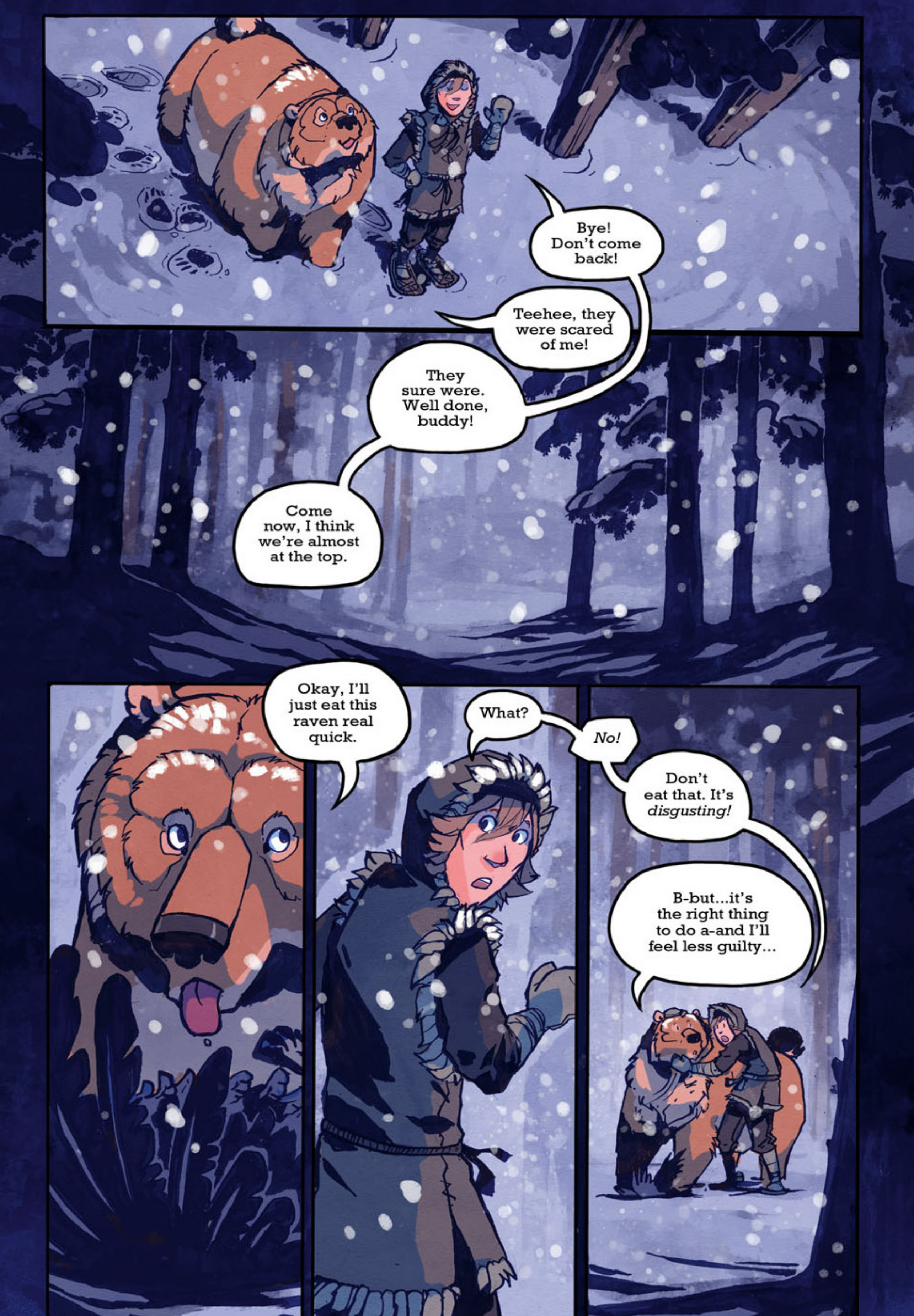

They're *scary!*
Ignore them, that's the most effective way to deal with anything threatening.
And you have no reason to be scared of a bunch of birds.
You're a big, tough bear!
Okay.

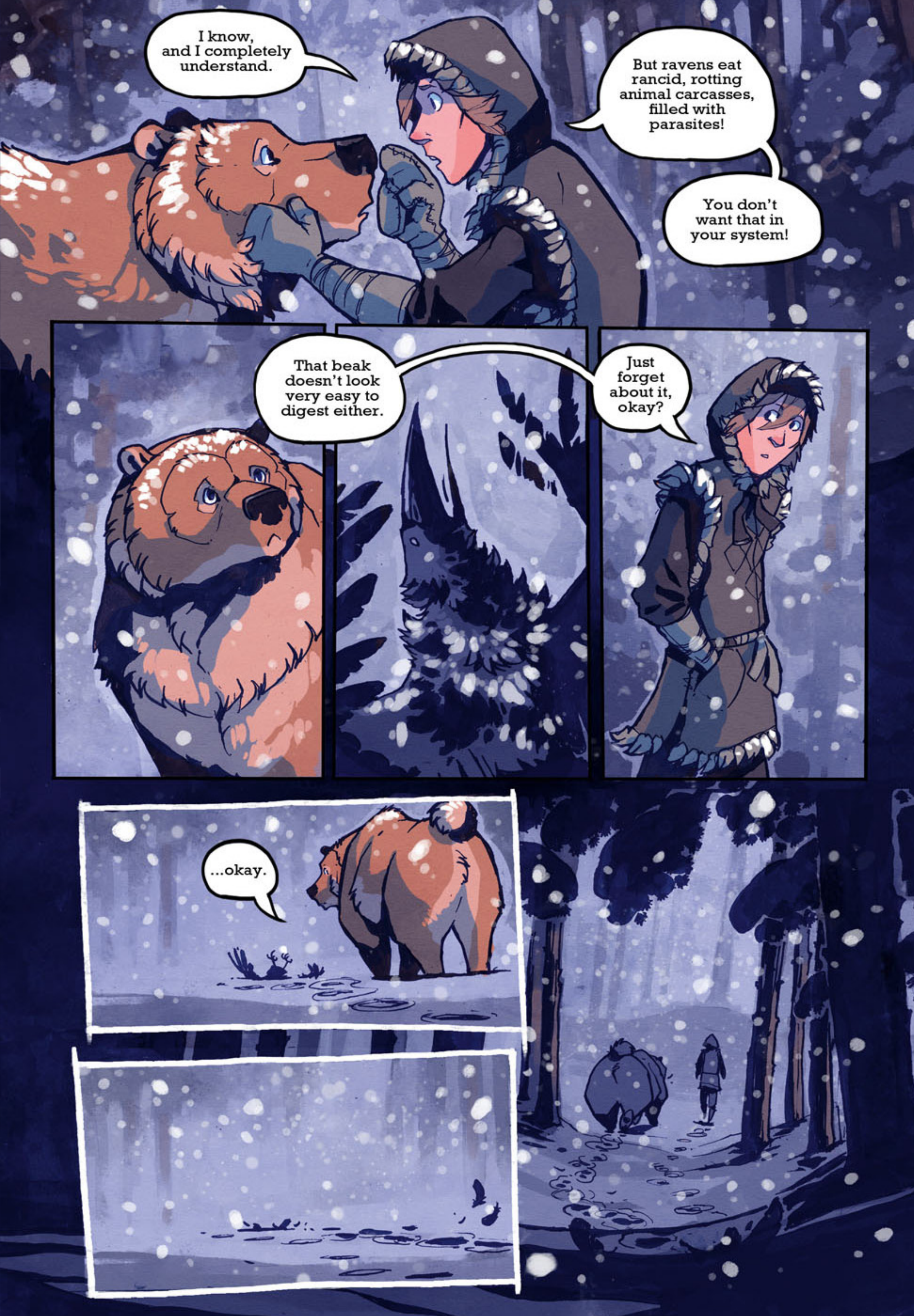

Hey! Hey, you! Bear!
Okay, just ignore them.
Bear, look up here!
Bear!
Hellooo!
Bear! Hey!
Bear! Bear, bear! Bear!!!
Are you deaf or something?
WHAT!?!
Oh come on!
I'm so sorry!
You're fat!
We're going to eat you both when you die!
Bear meat is yummy meat!
Hey! Hey! Do you two feel like you're about to die soon, or should we help you with that part?
Don't even bother trying anything. We'll kill you right back if we have to!

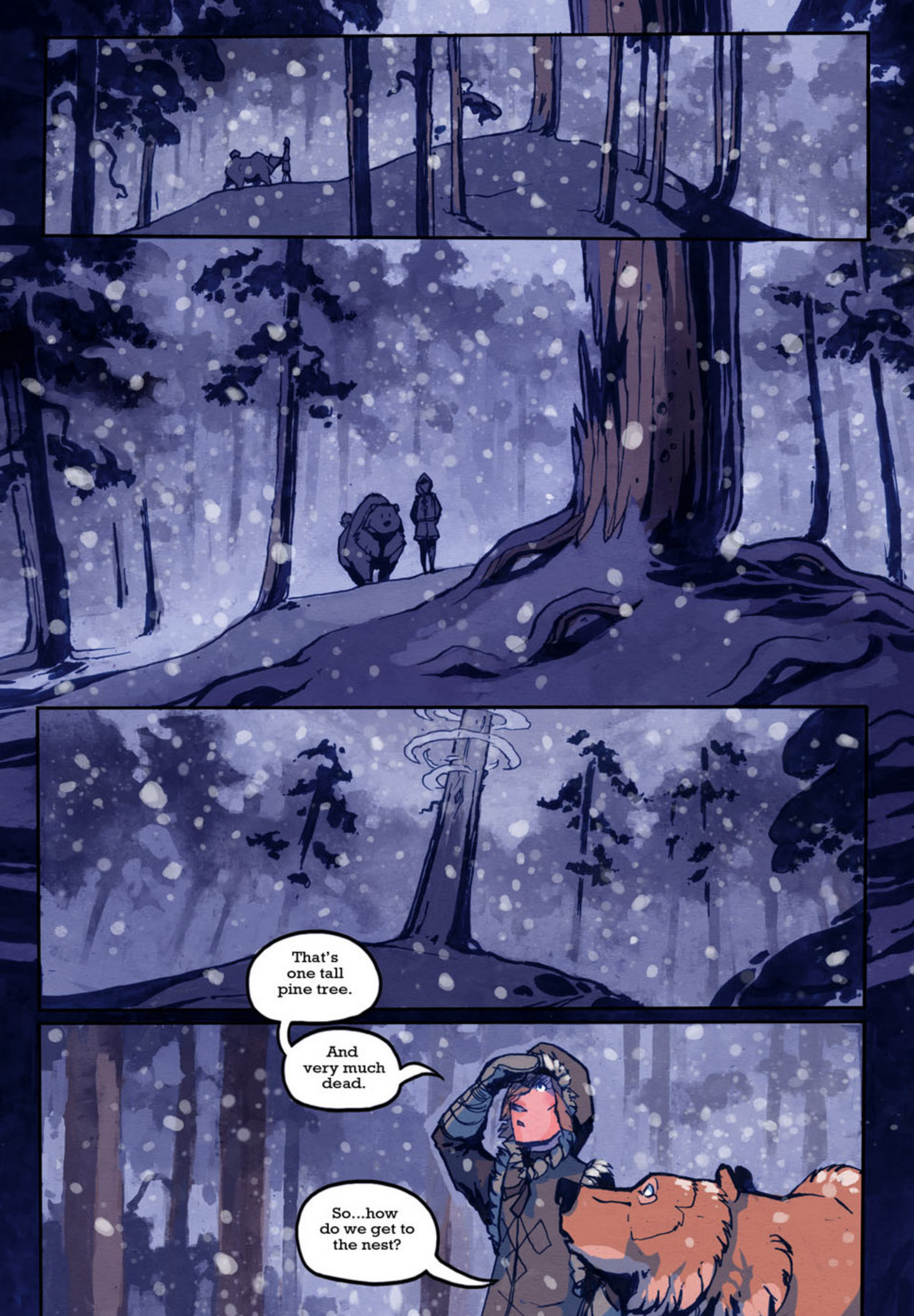

Krahah! No you won't!
You talk big, but I'm sure that the both of you are just as wimpy as that *other* fat bear!
We could peck your eyes right out of your head, and all you'd do would be to cry and flail!
Let's see if I'm right!
Umm...
-PECK!
Eee!

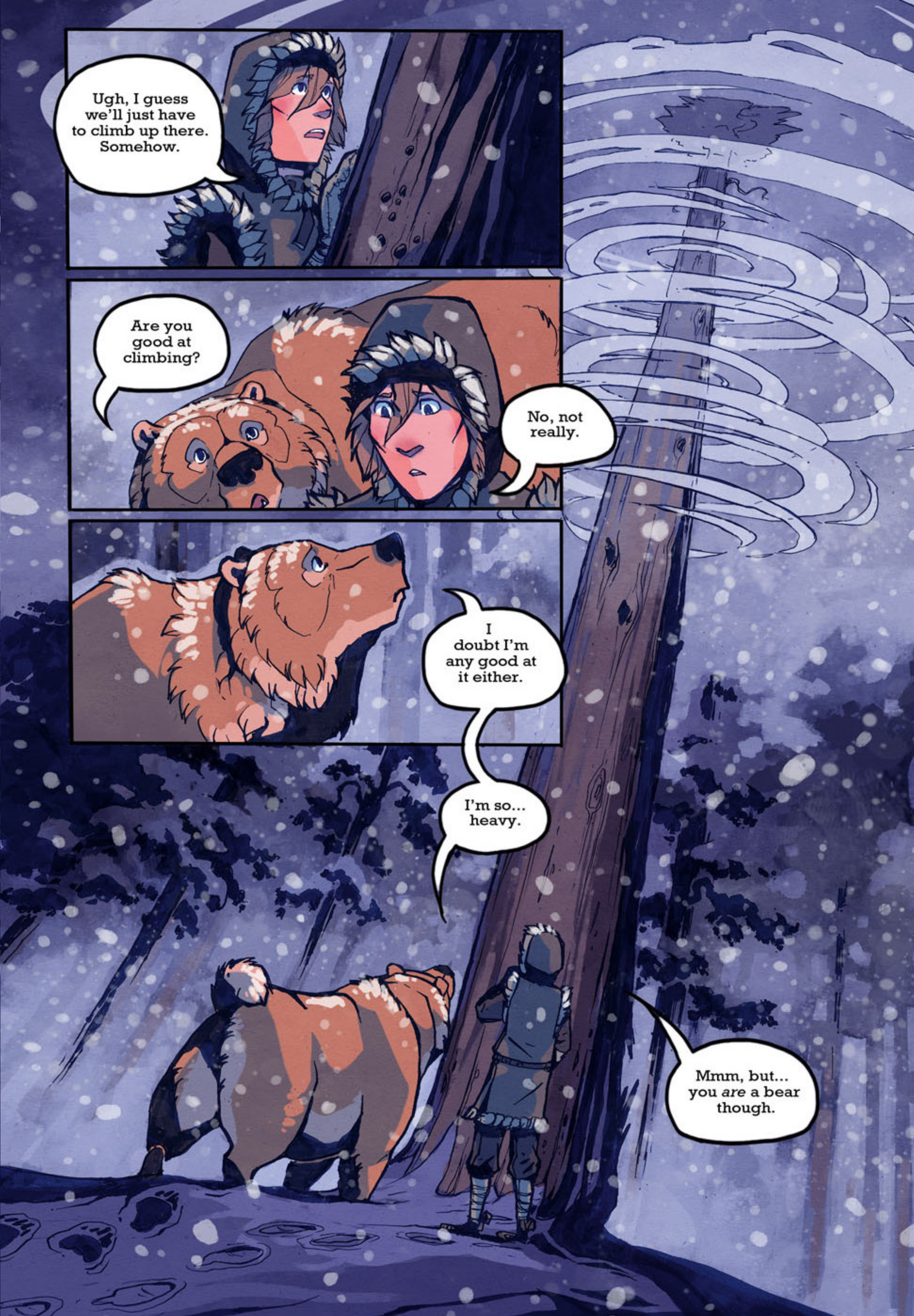

KRRRK!
PLOFF!

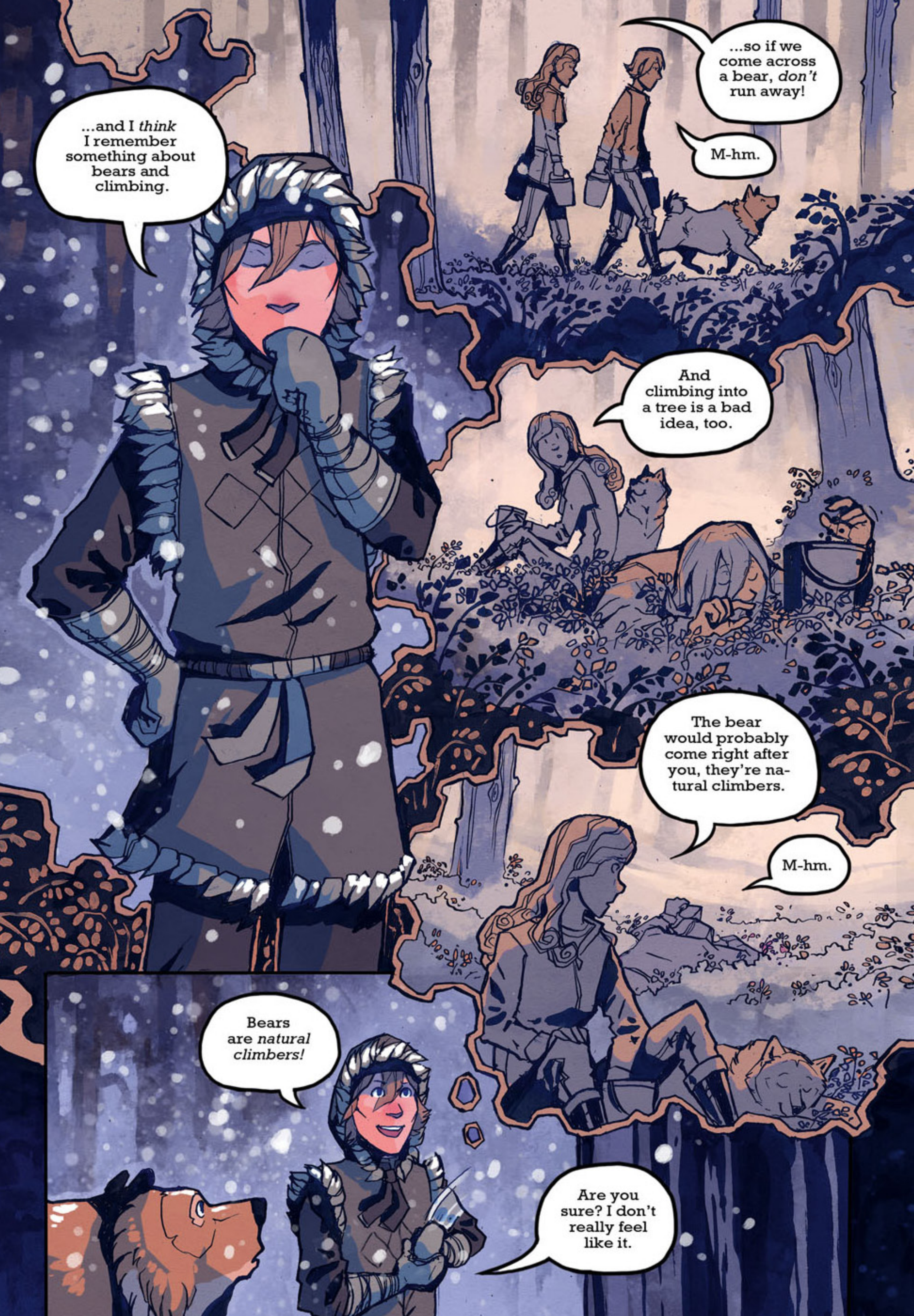

Ville, stand up and try to look formidable!
Uh...
See? We have no qualms about defending ourselves by any means possible.
And if you think *that* was bad, just imagine what kind of devastation my friend here could inflict upon your ranks.
Holy *crow!*
Let's get out of here!

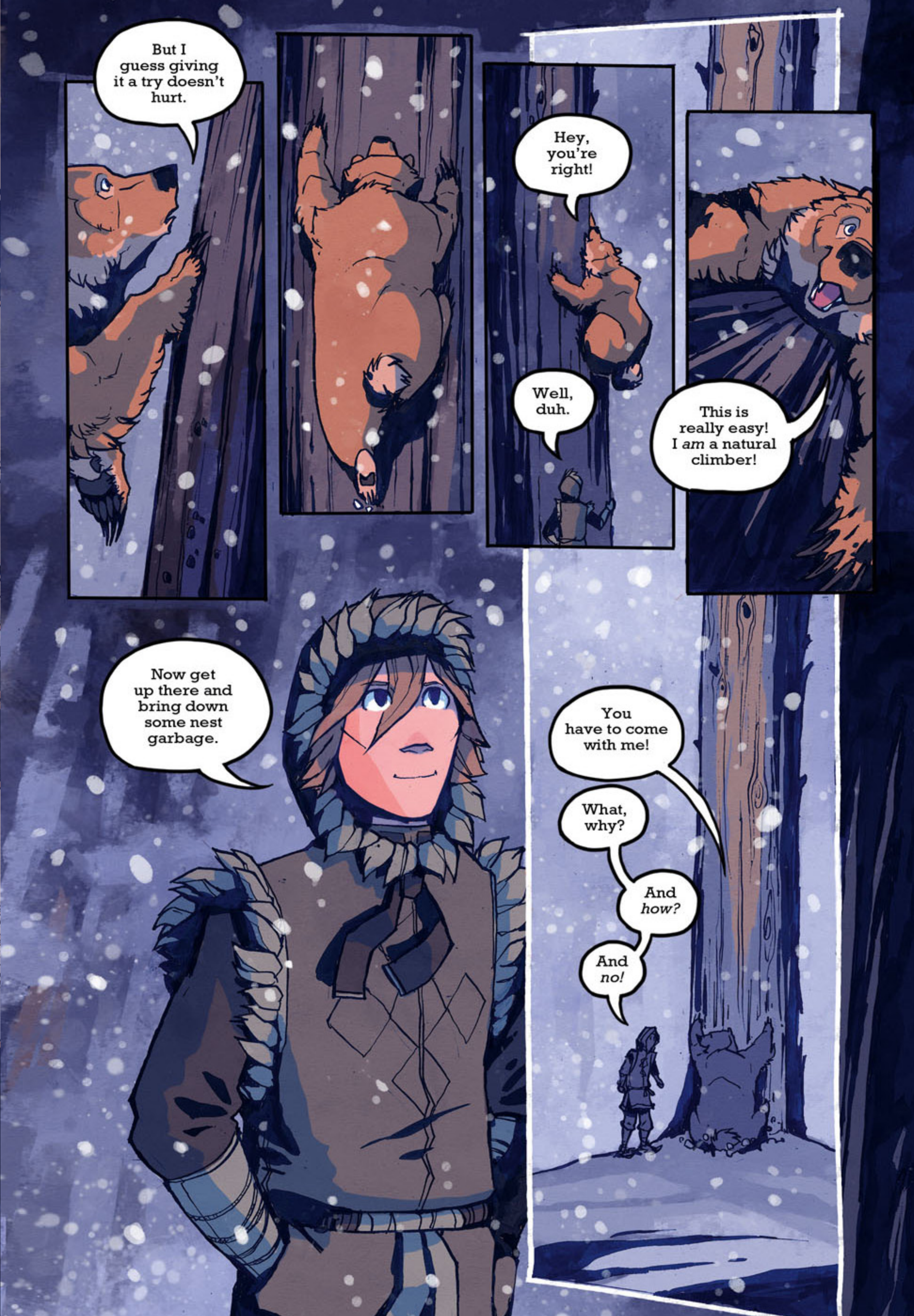

Bye! Don't come back!
Teehee, they were scared of me!
They sure were. Well done, buddy!
Come now, I think we're almost at the top.
Okay, I'll just eat this raven real quick.
What?
No!
Don't eat that. It's *disgusting!*
B-but...it's the right thing to do a-and I'll feel less guilty...

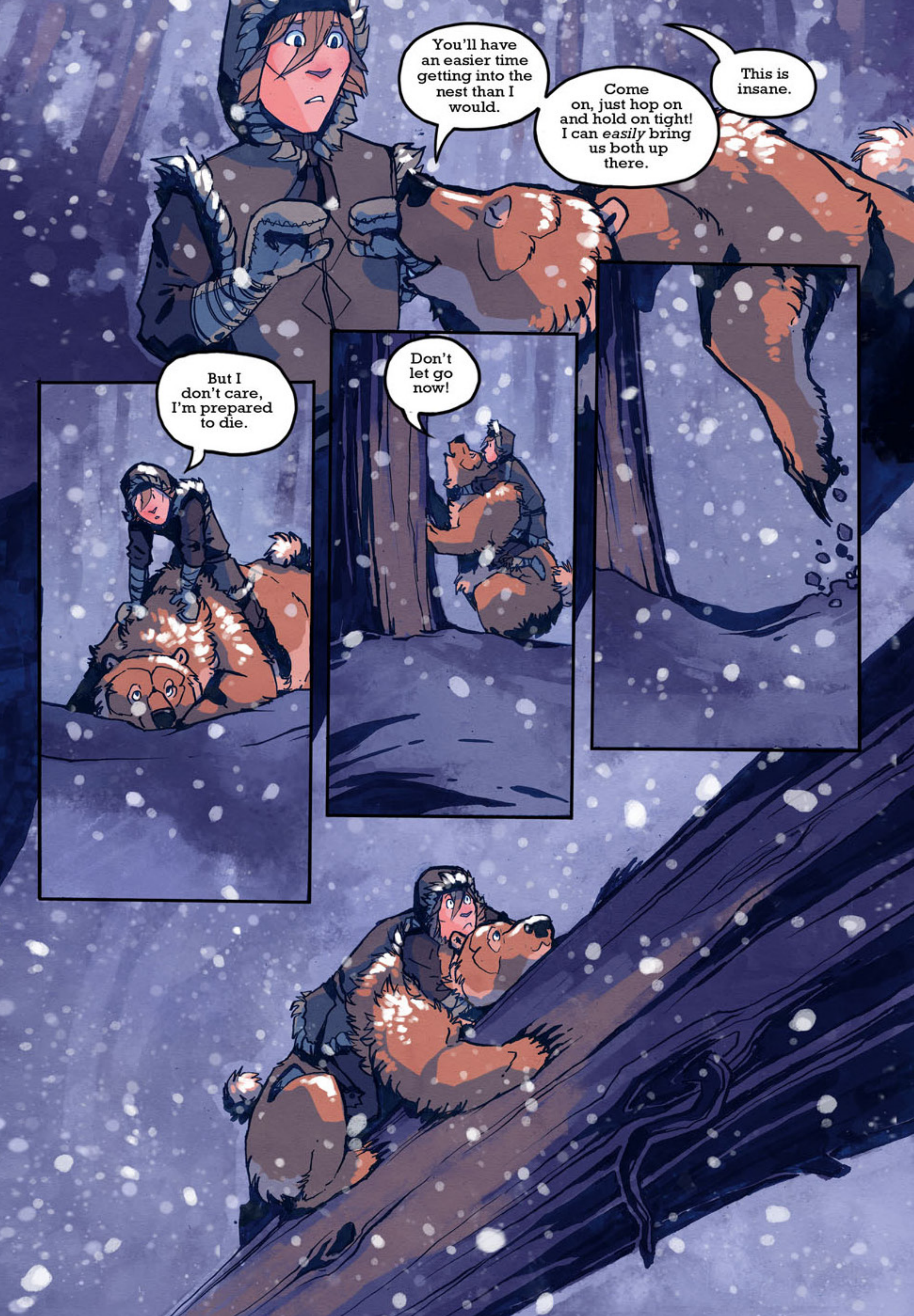

I know, and I completely understand.
But ravens eat rancid, rotting animal carcasses, filled with parasites!
You don't want that in your system!
That beak doesn't look very easy to digest either.
Just forget about it, okay?
...okay.

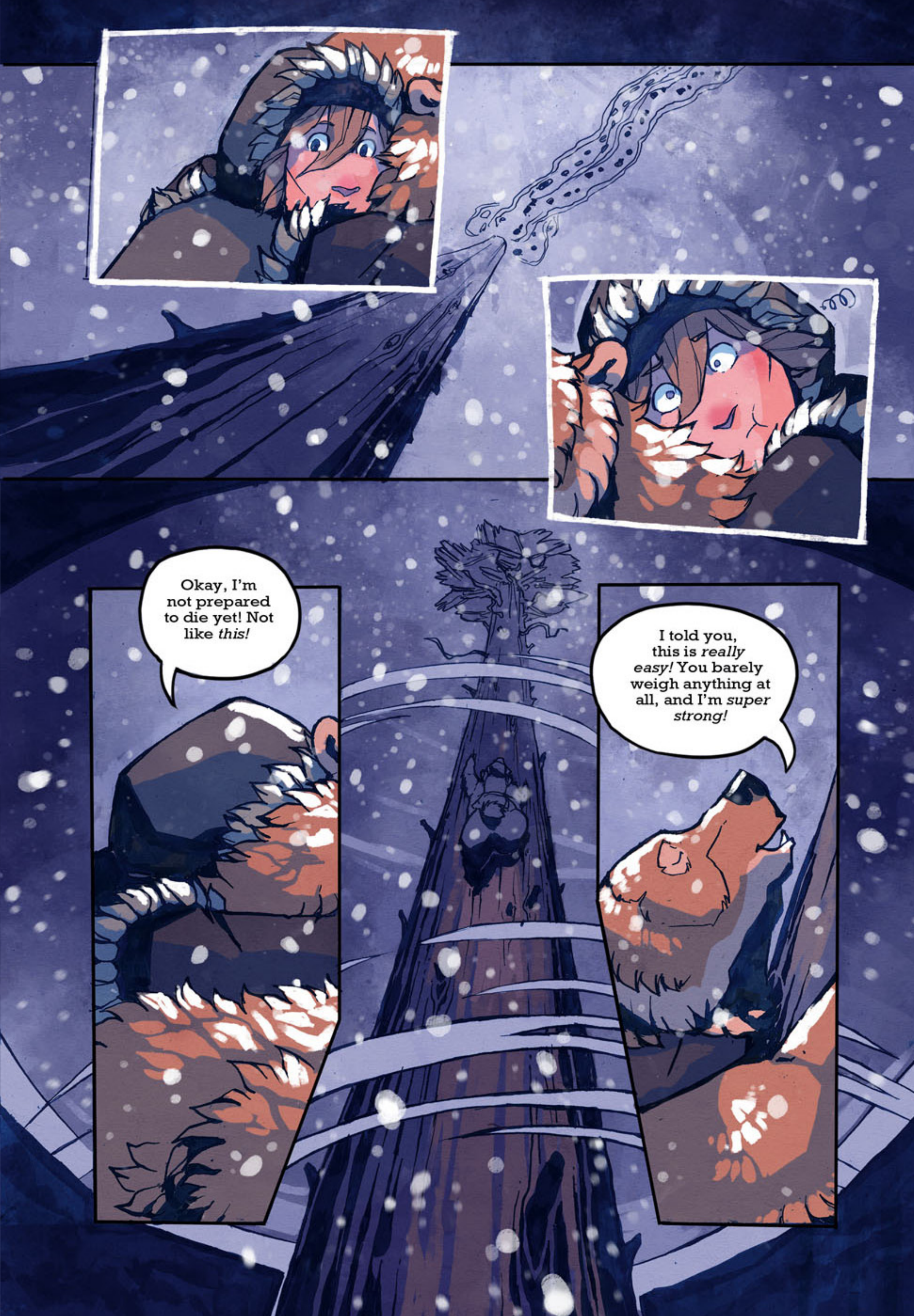

That's one tall pine tree.
And very much dead.
So...how do we get to the nest?

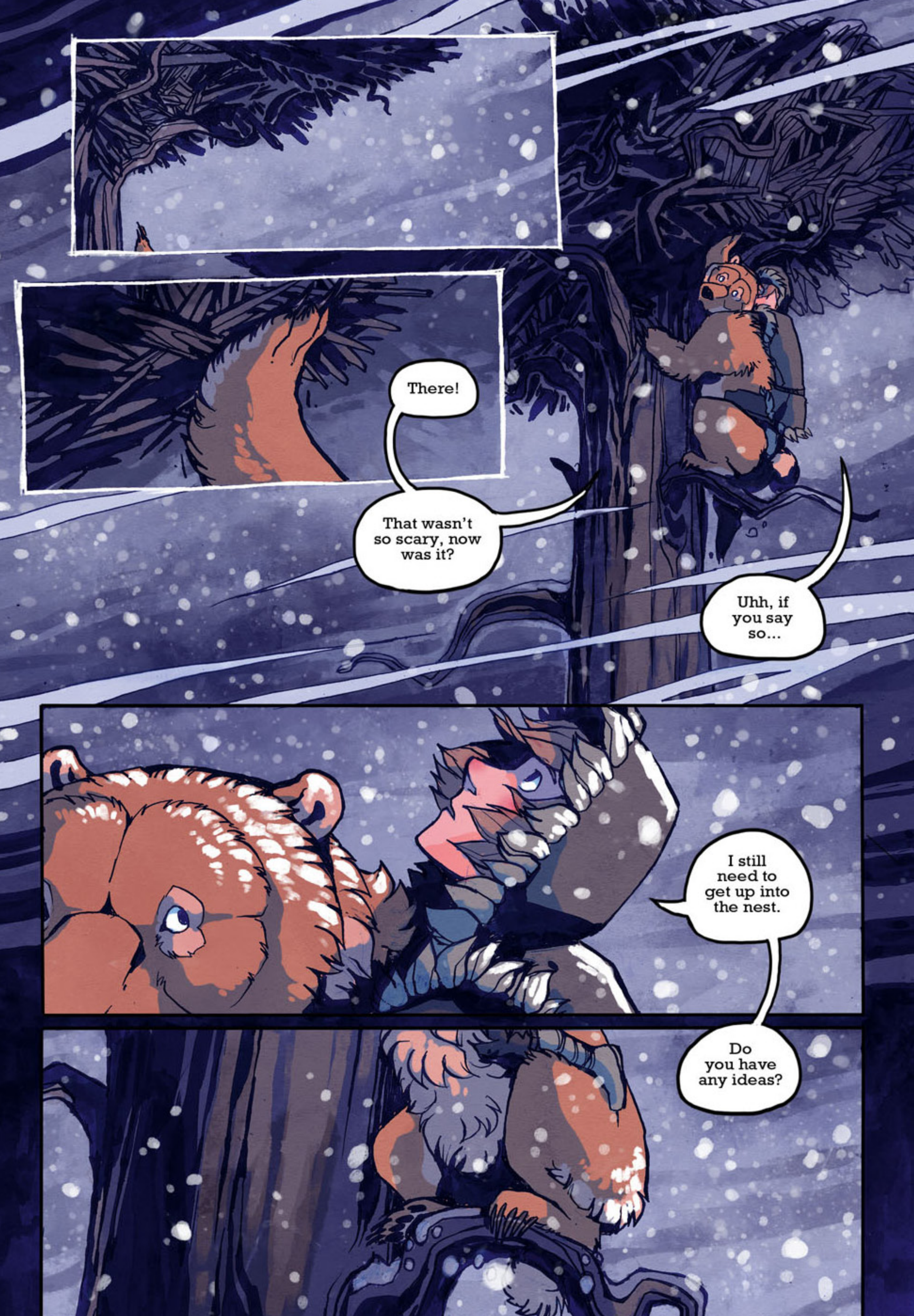

Ugh, I guess we'll just have to climb up there. Somehow.
Are you good at climbing?
No, not really.
I doubt I'm any good at it either.
I'm so... heavy.
Mmm, but... you *are* a bear though.

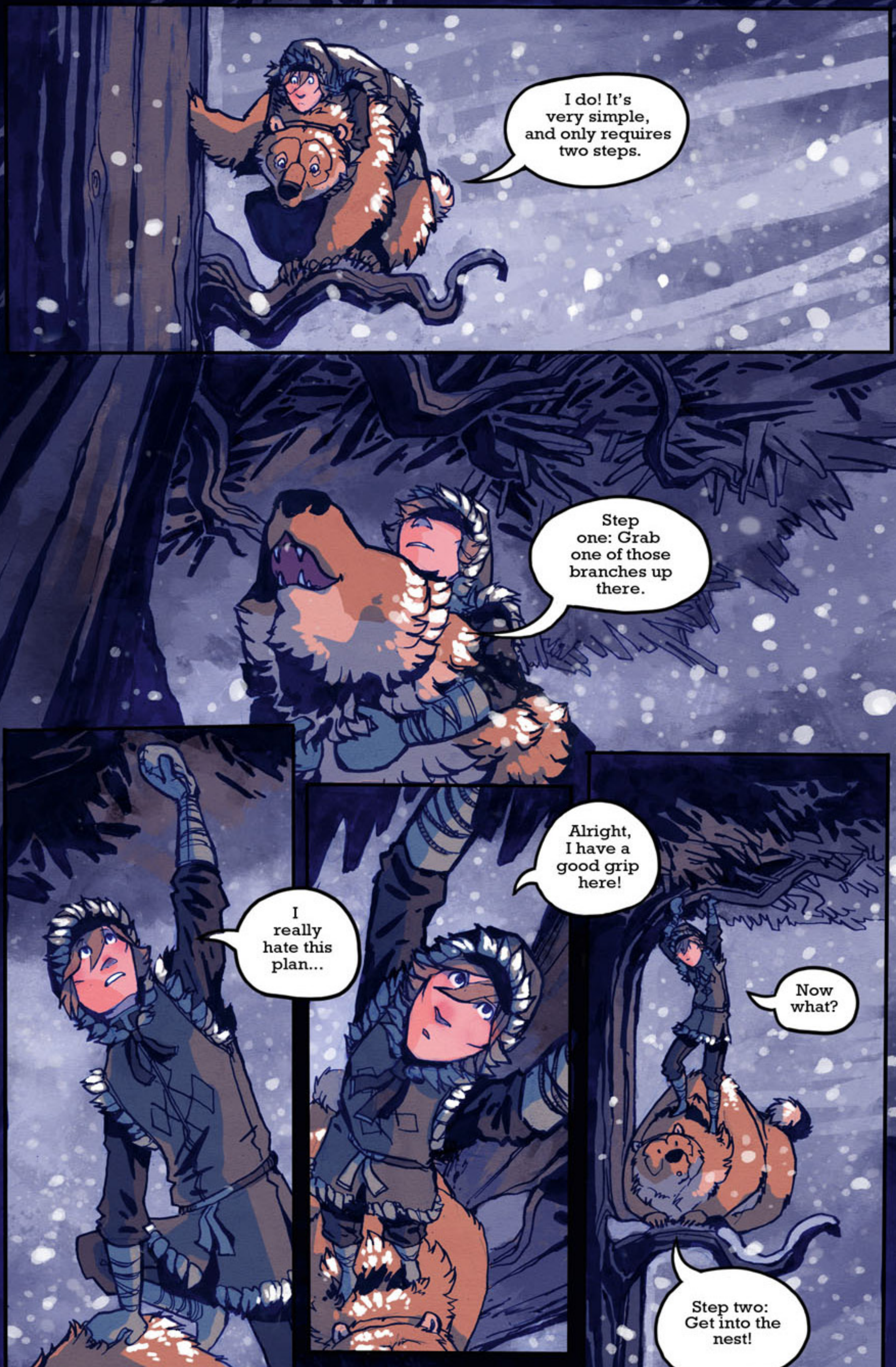

...and I *think* I remember something about bears and climbing.
...so if we come across a bear, *don't* run away!
M-hm.
And climbing into a tree is a bad idea, too.
The bear would probably come right after you, they're natural climbers.
M-hm.
Bears are *natural climbers!*
Are you sure? I don't really feel like it.

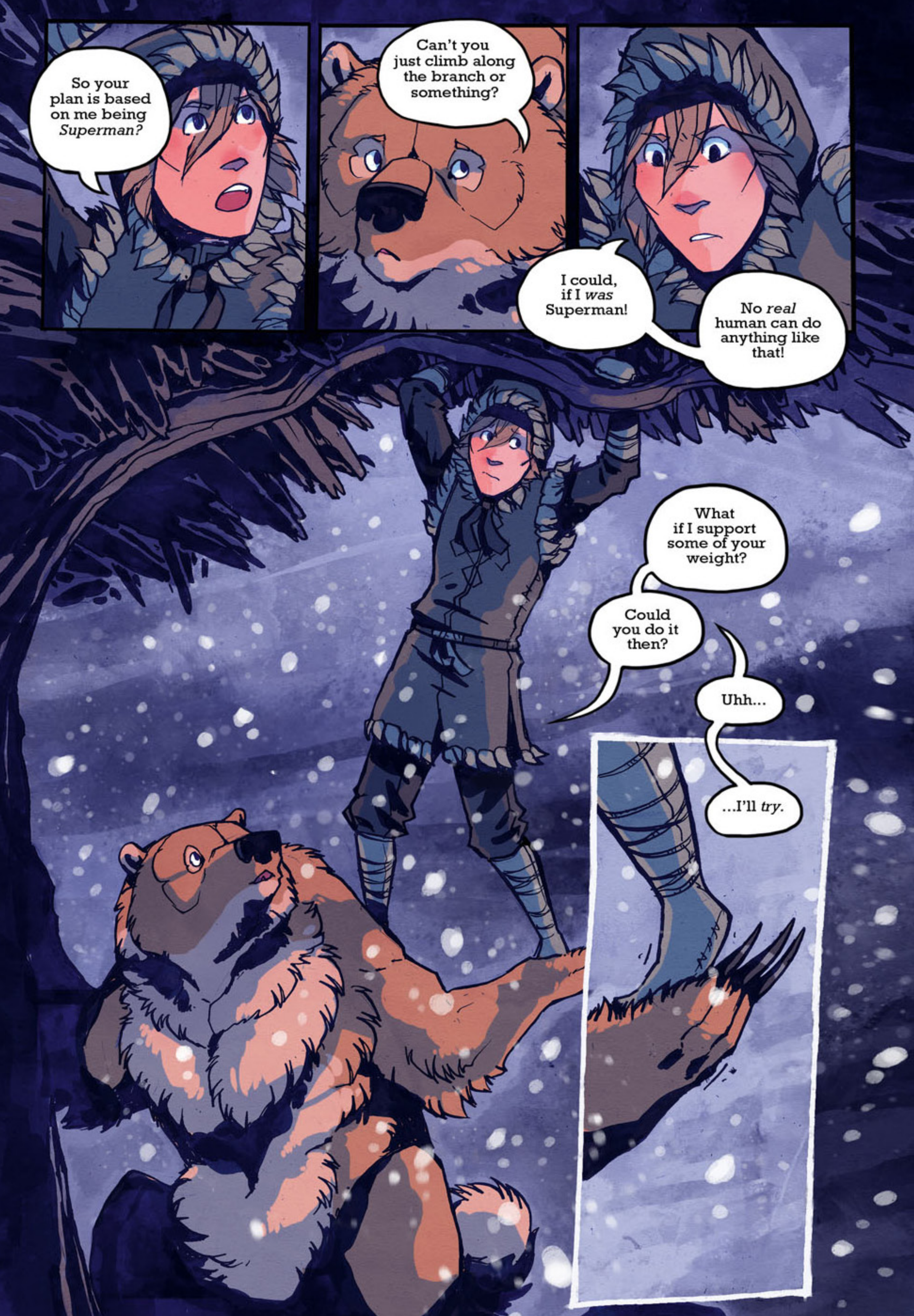

But I guess giving it a try doesn't hurt.
Hey, you're right!
Well, duh.
This is really easy! I *am* a natural climber!
Now get up there and bring down some nest garbage.
You have to come with me!
What, why?
And *how?*
And *no!*

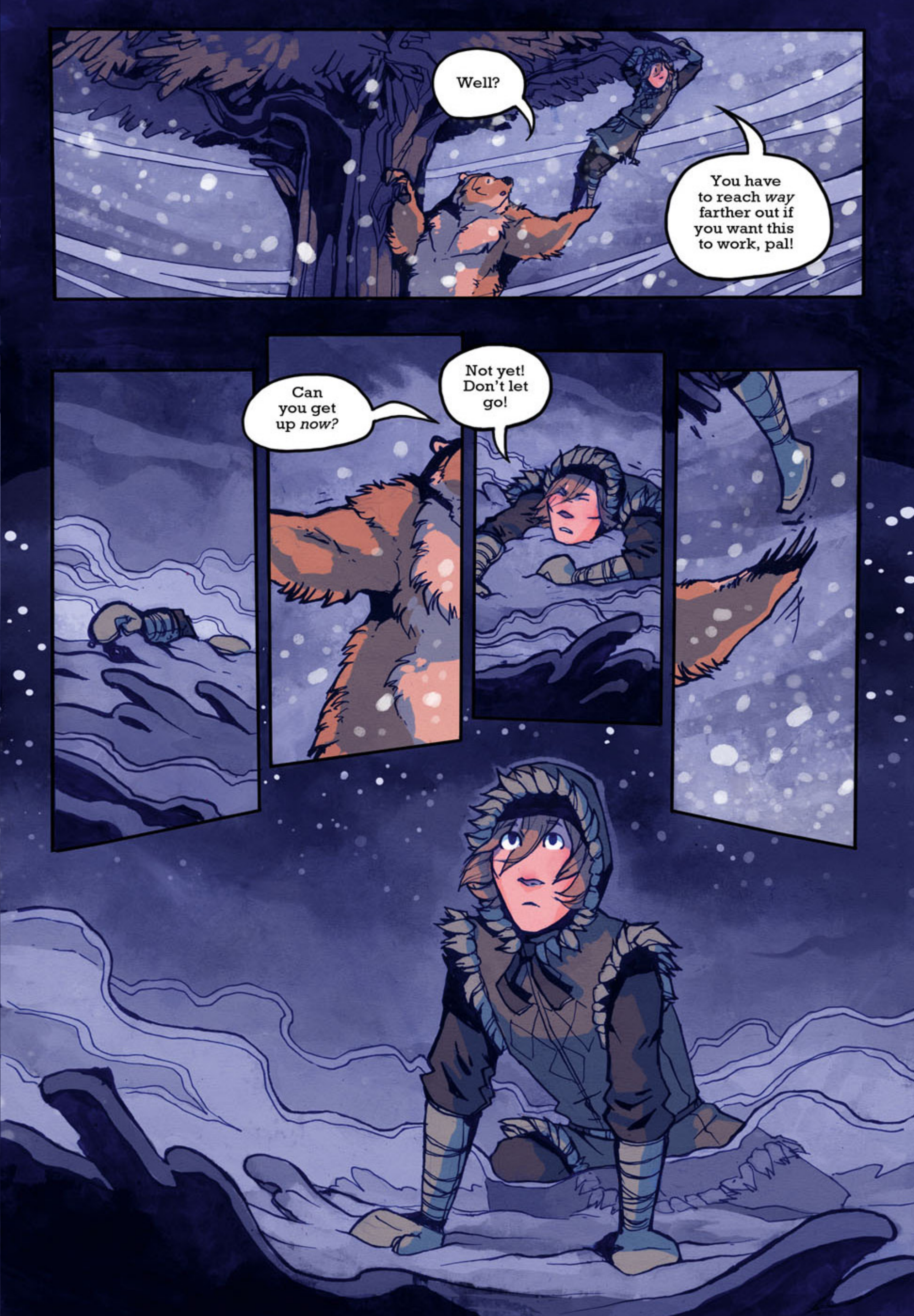

You'll have an easier time getting into the nest than I would.
Come on, just hop on and hold on tight! I can *easily* bring us both up there.
This is insane.
But I don't care, I'm prepared to die.
Don't let go now!

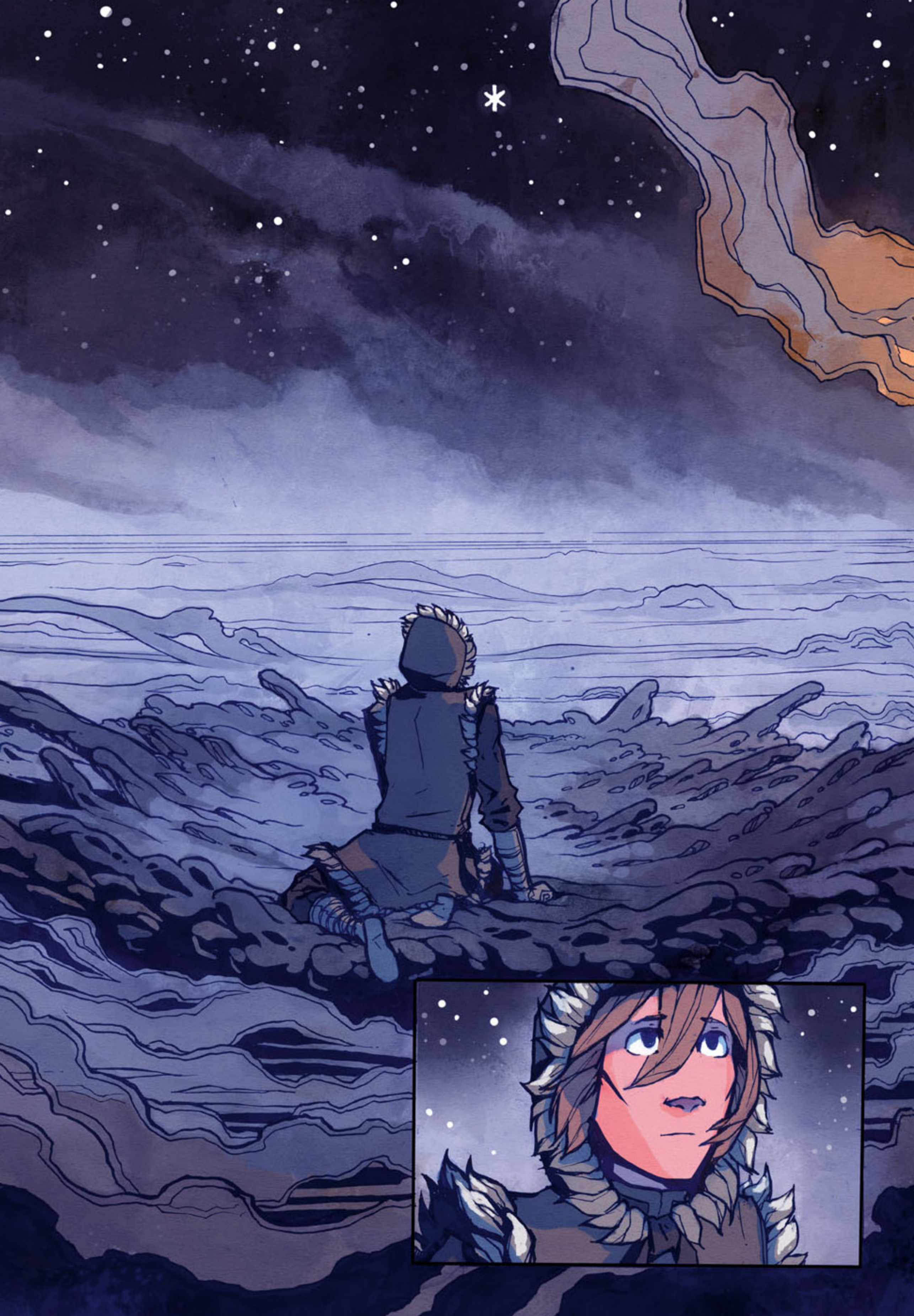

Okay, I'm not prepared to die yet! Not like *this!*
I told you, this is *really easy!* You barely weigh anything at all, and I'm *super strong!*

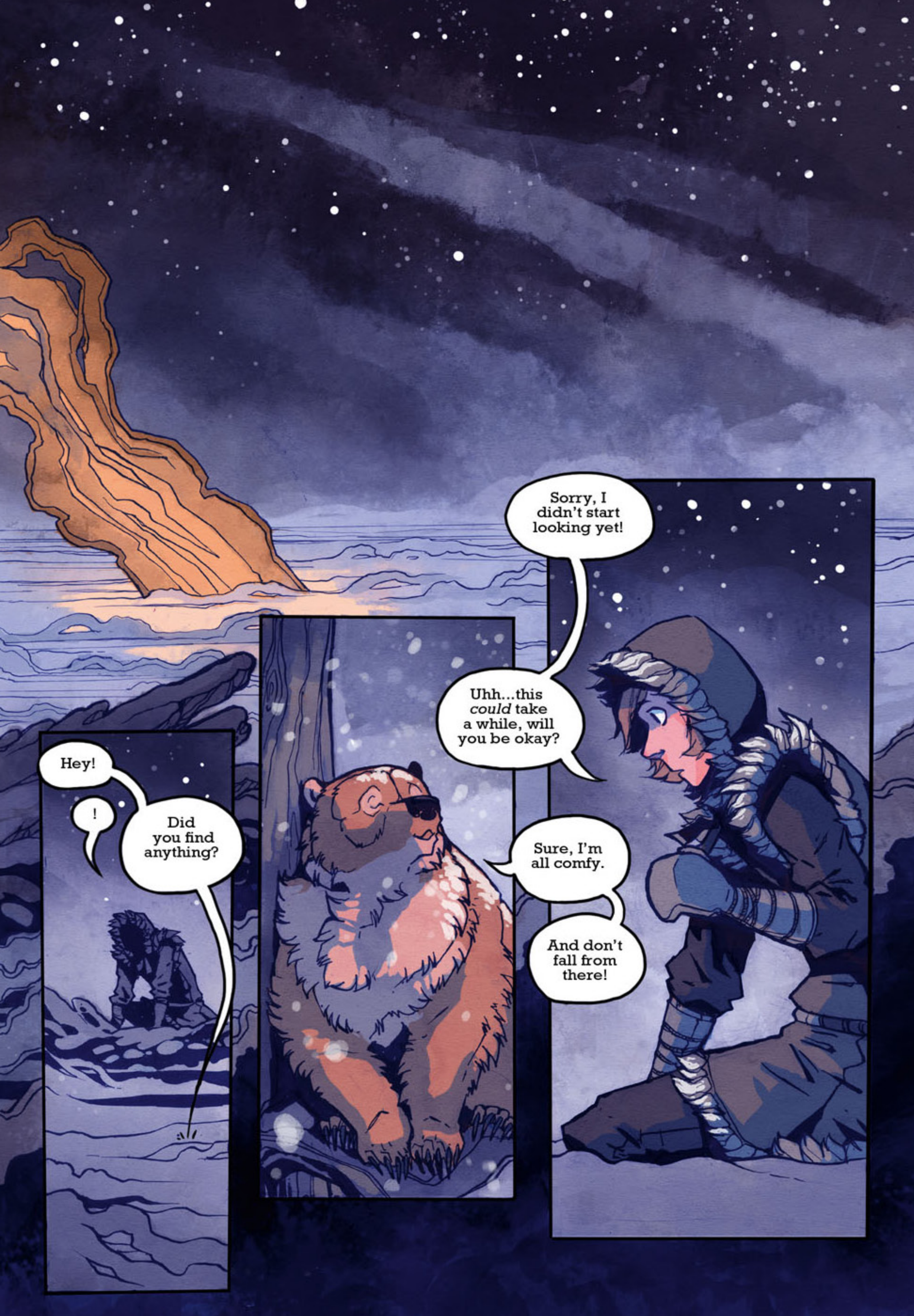

There!
That wasn't so scary, now was it?
Uhh, if you say so...
I still need to get up into the nest.
Do you have any ideas?

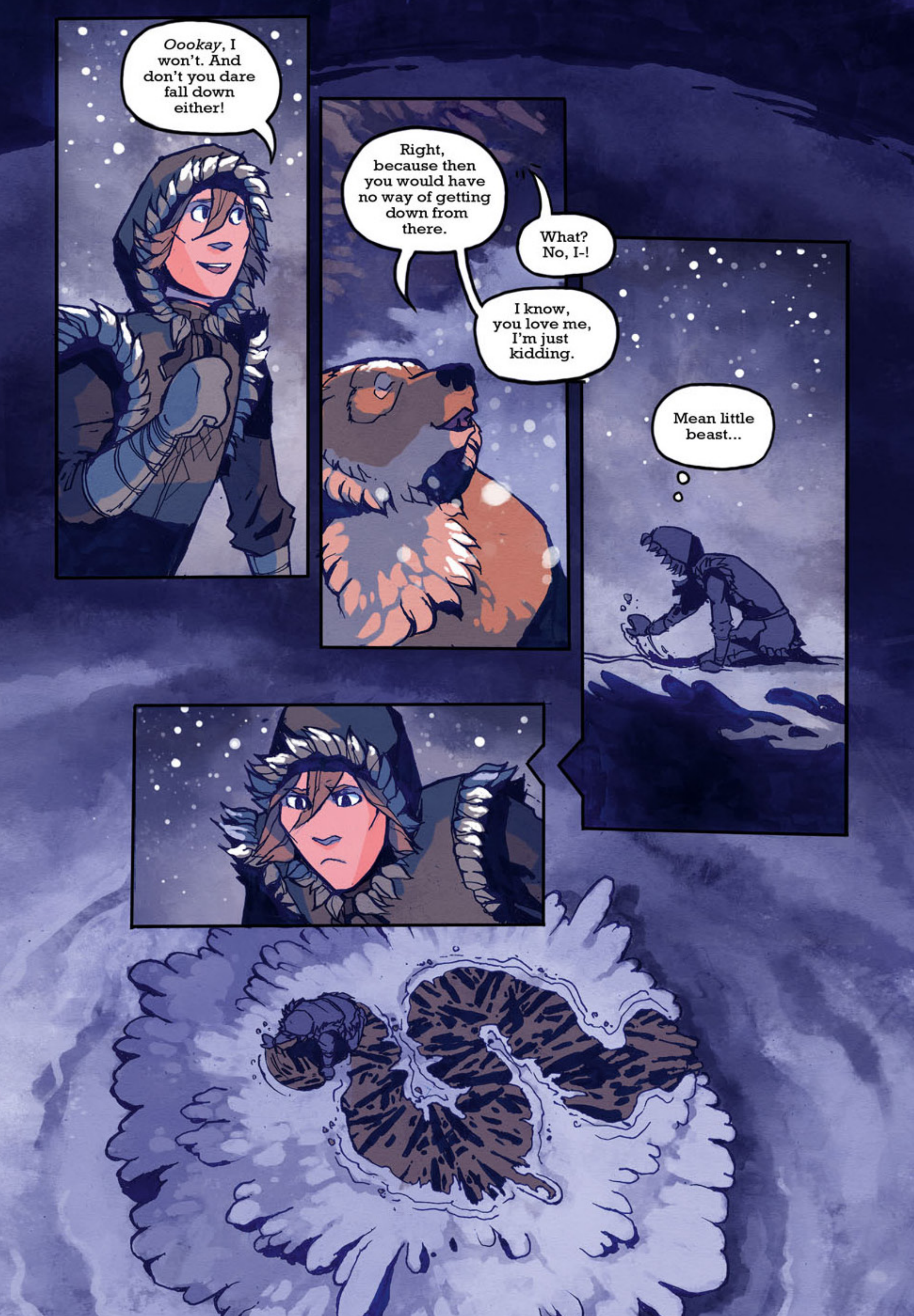

I do! It's very simple, and only requires two steps.
Step one: Grab one of those branches up there.
I really hate this plan...
Alright, I have a good grip here!
Now what?
Step two: Get into the nest!

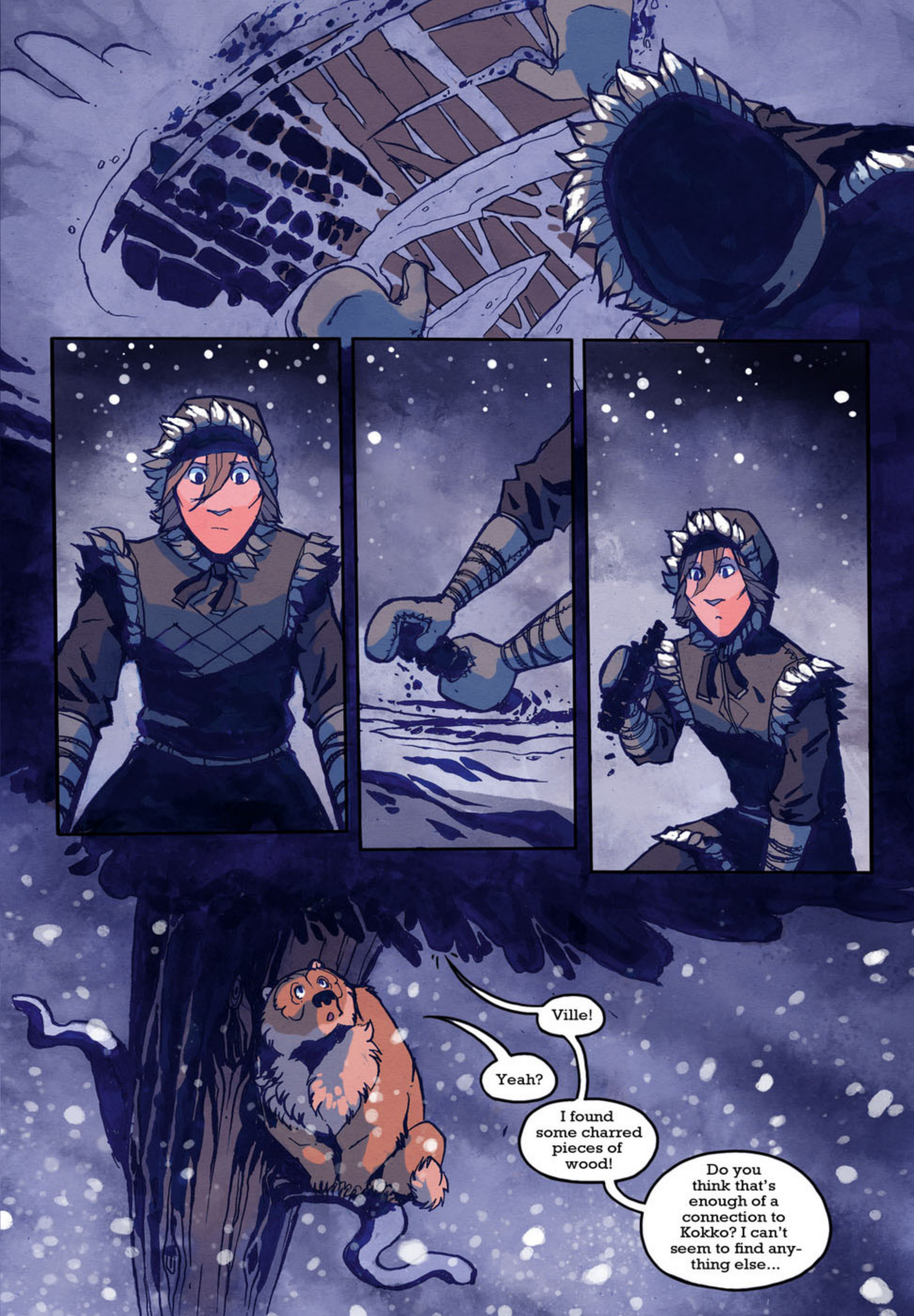

So your plan is based on me being *Superman?*
Can't you just climb along the branch or something?
I could, if I *was* Superman!
No *real* human can do anything like that!
What if I support some of your weight?
Could you do it then?
Uhh...
...I'll *try.*

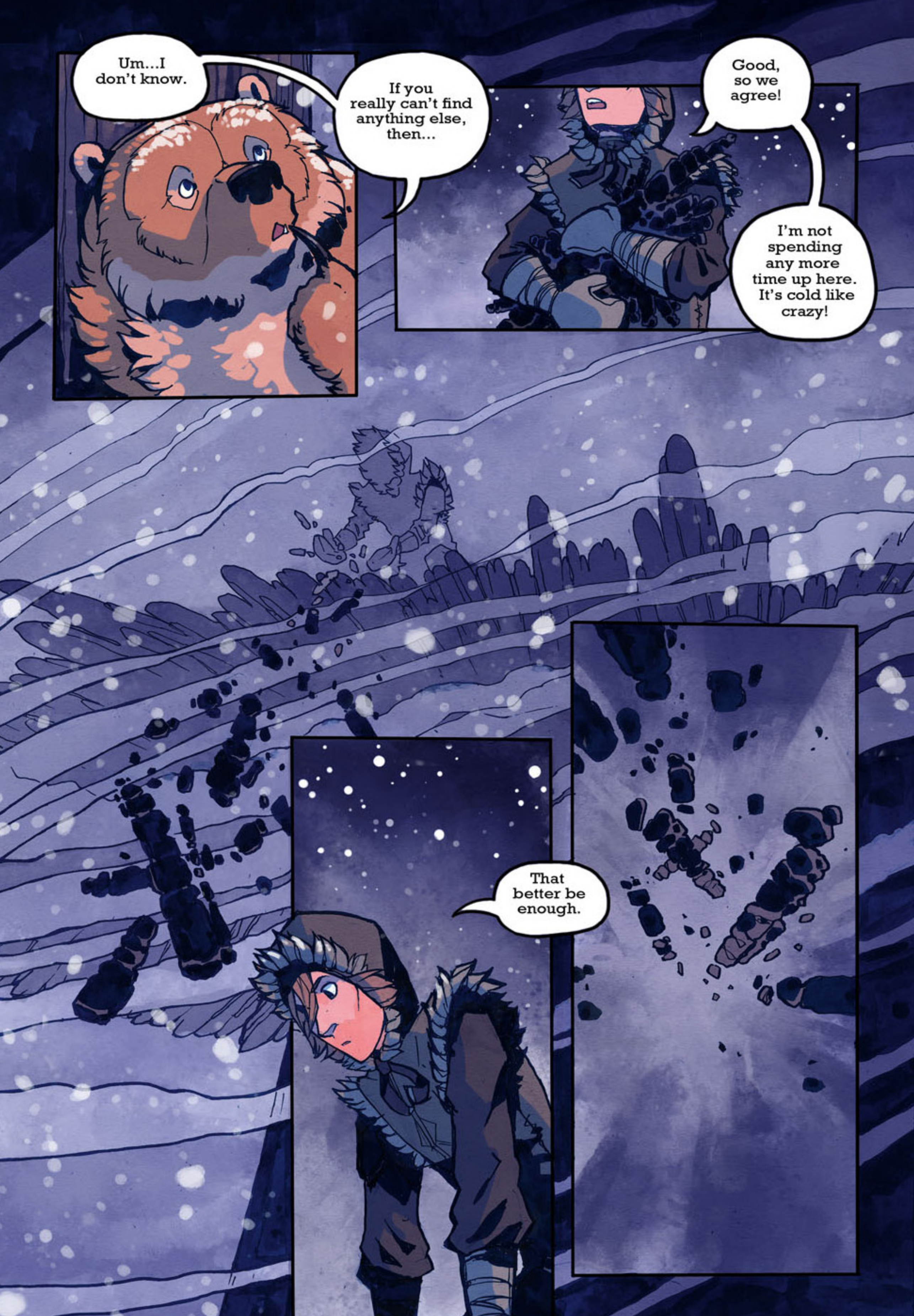

Well?
You have to reach *way* farther out if you want this to work, pal!
Can you get up *now?*
Not yet! Don't let go!

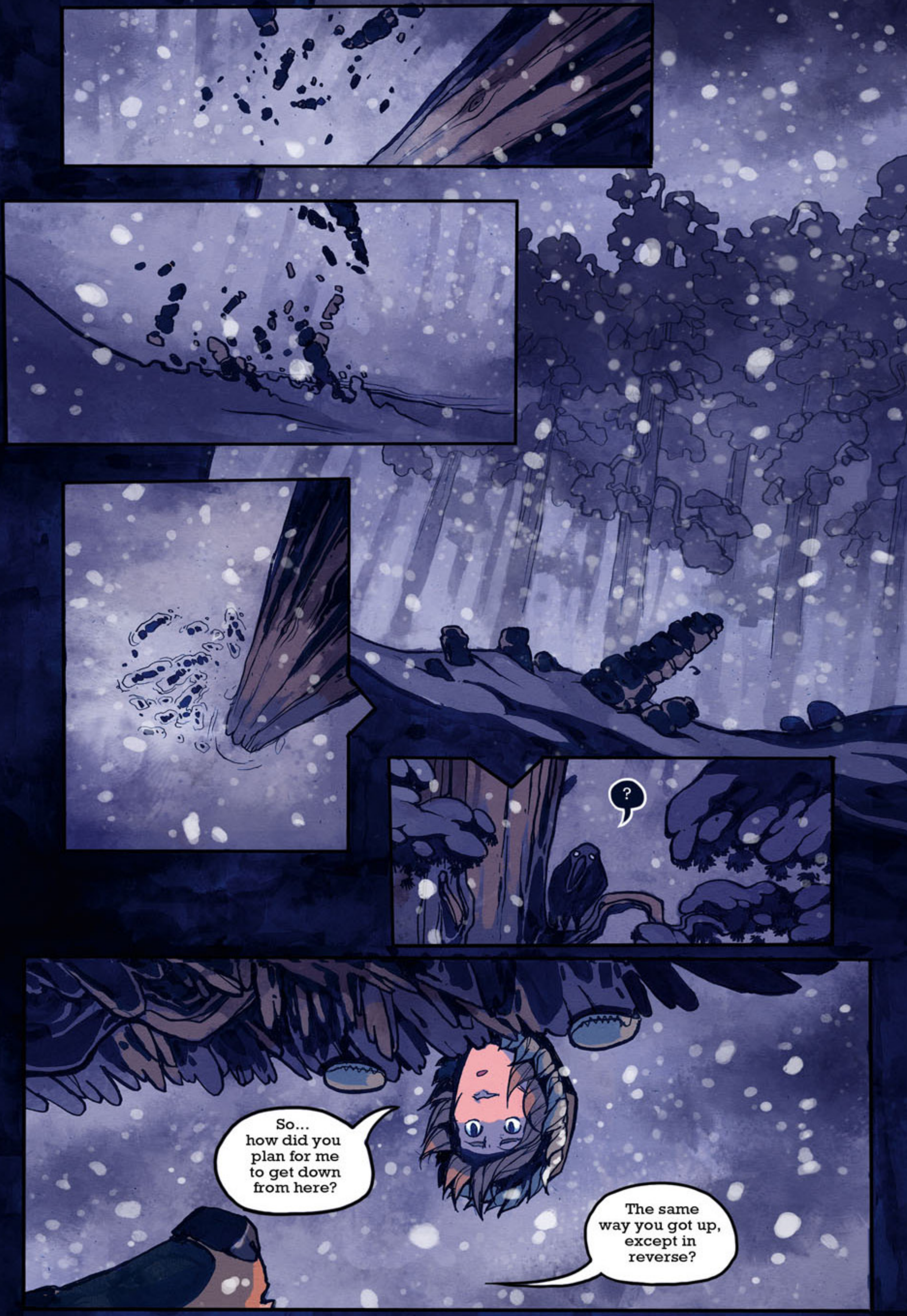


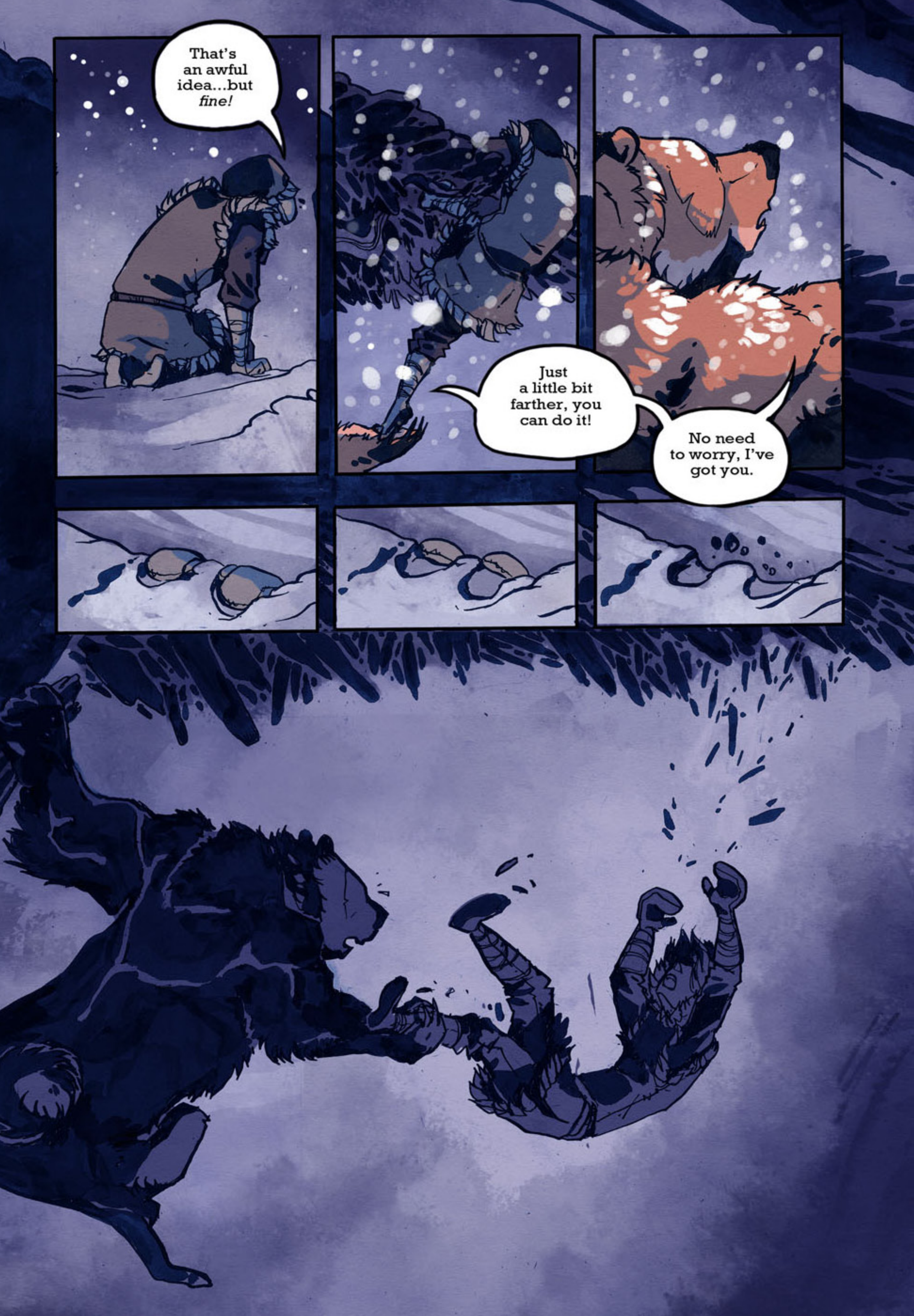

Hey!
!
Did you find anything?
Sorry, I didn't start looking yet!
Uhh...this *could* take a while, will you be okay?
Sure, I'm all comfy.
And don't fall from there!

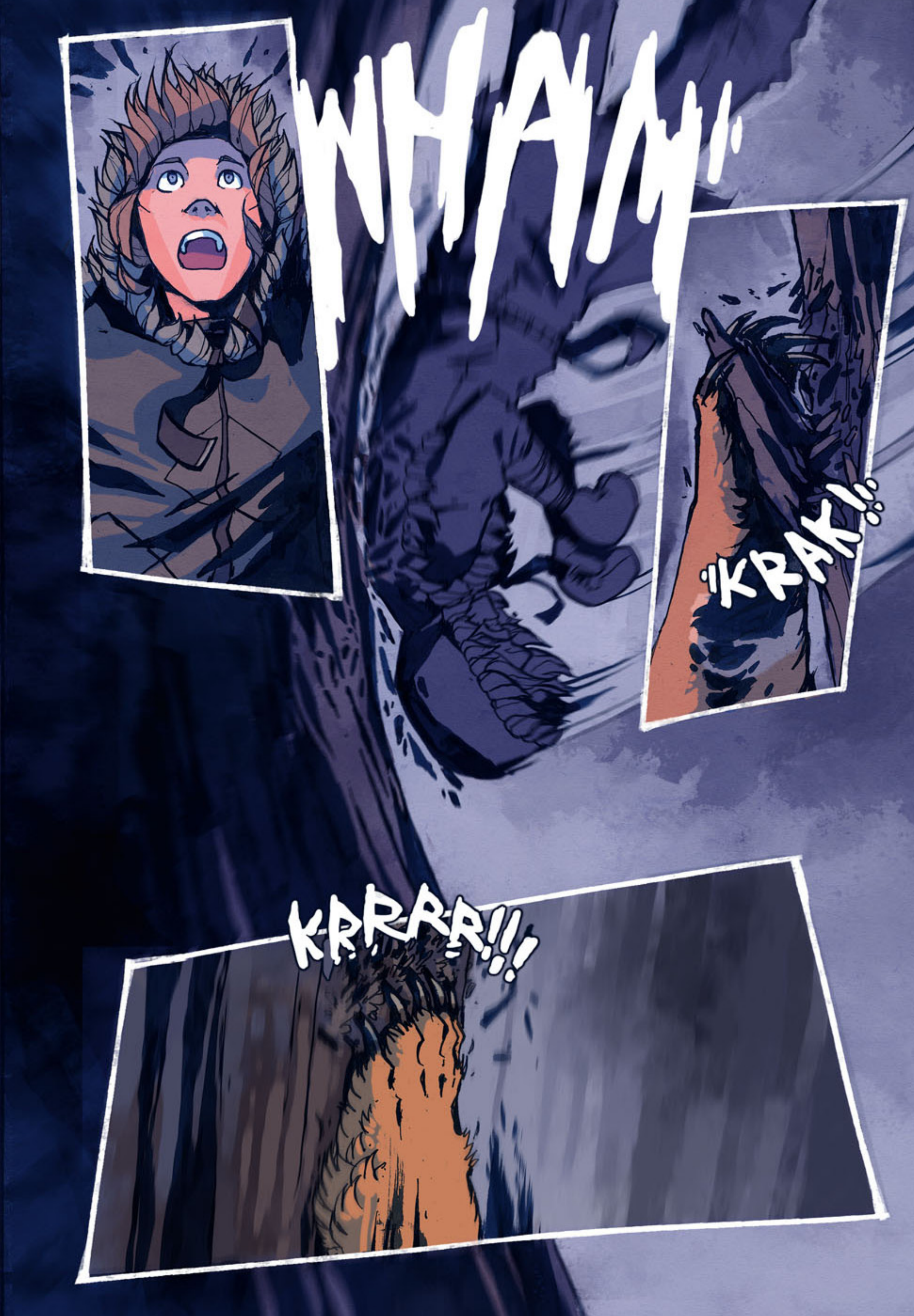

Oookay, I won't. And don't you dare fall down either!
Right, because then you would have no way of getting down from there.
What? No, I-!
I know, you love me, I'm just kidding.
Mean little beast...

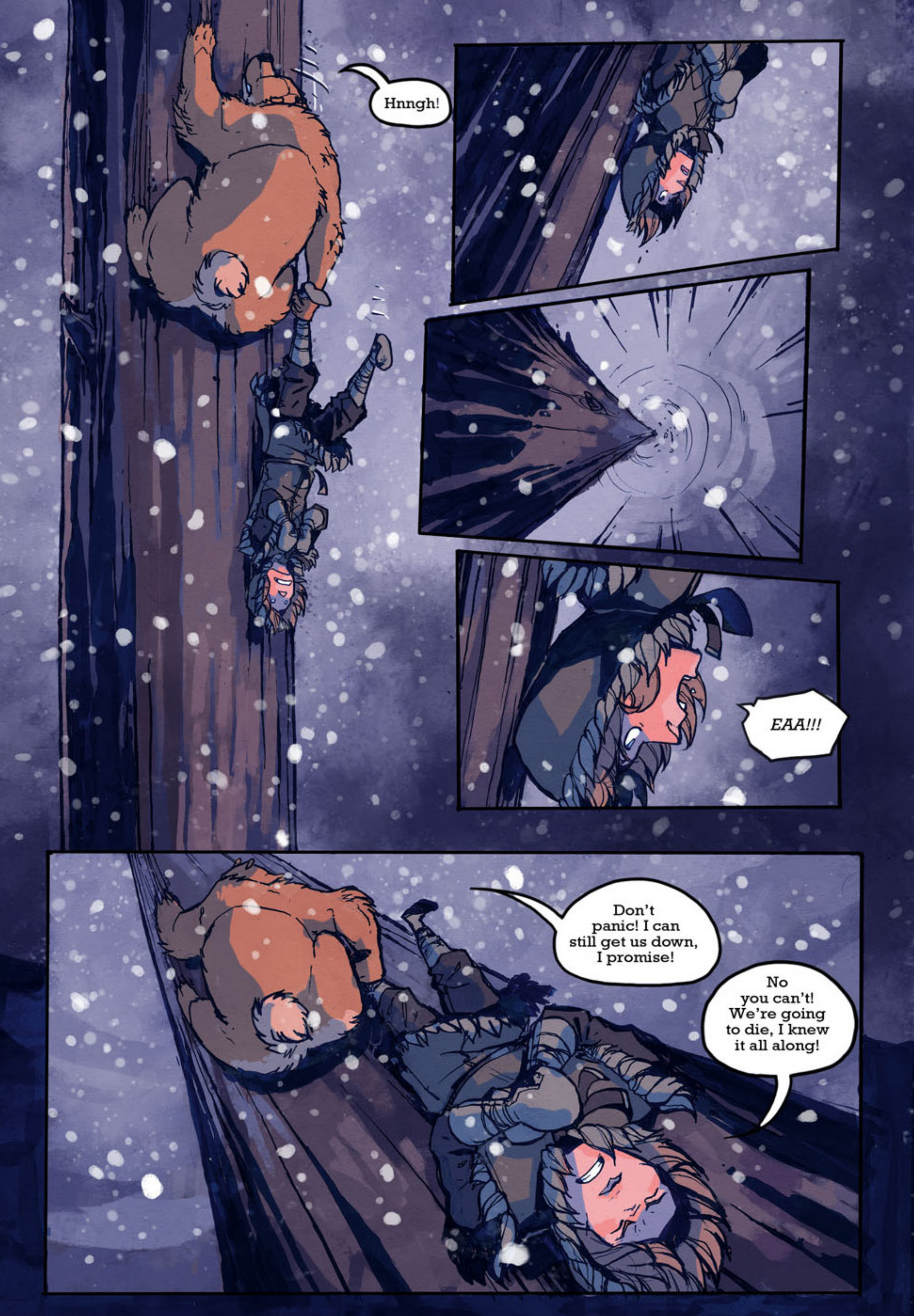

Ville!
Yeah?
I found some charred pieces of wood!
Do you think that's enough of a connection to Kokko? I can't seem to find anything else...

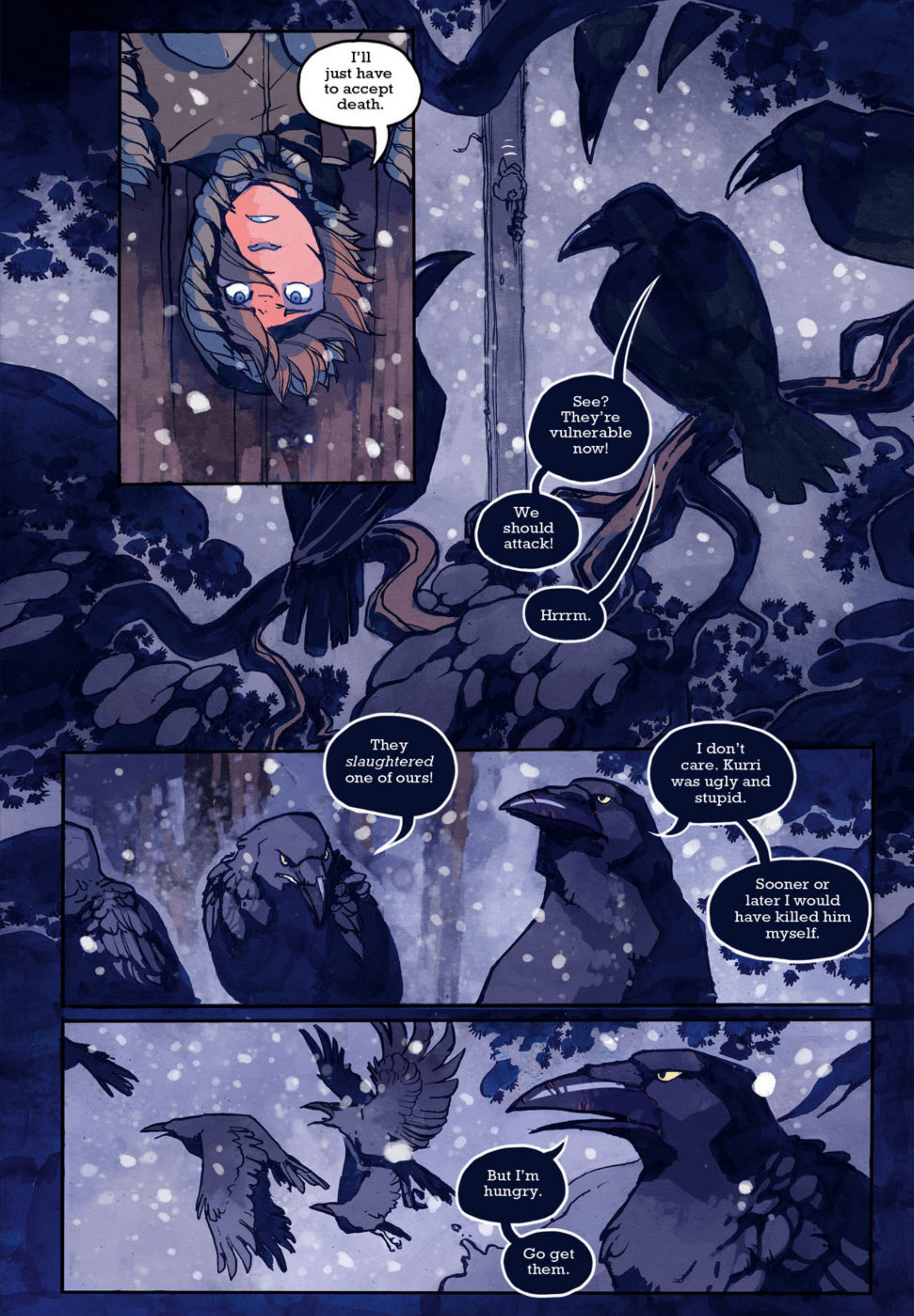

Um...I don't know.
If you really can't find anything else, then...
Good, so we agree!
I'm not spending any more time up here. It's cold like crazy!
That better be enough.

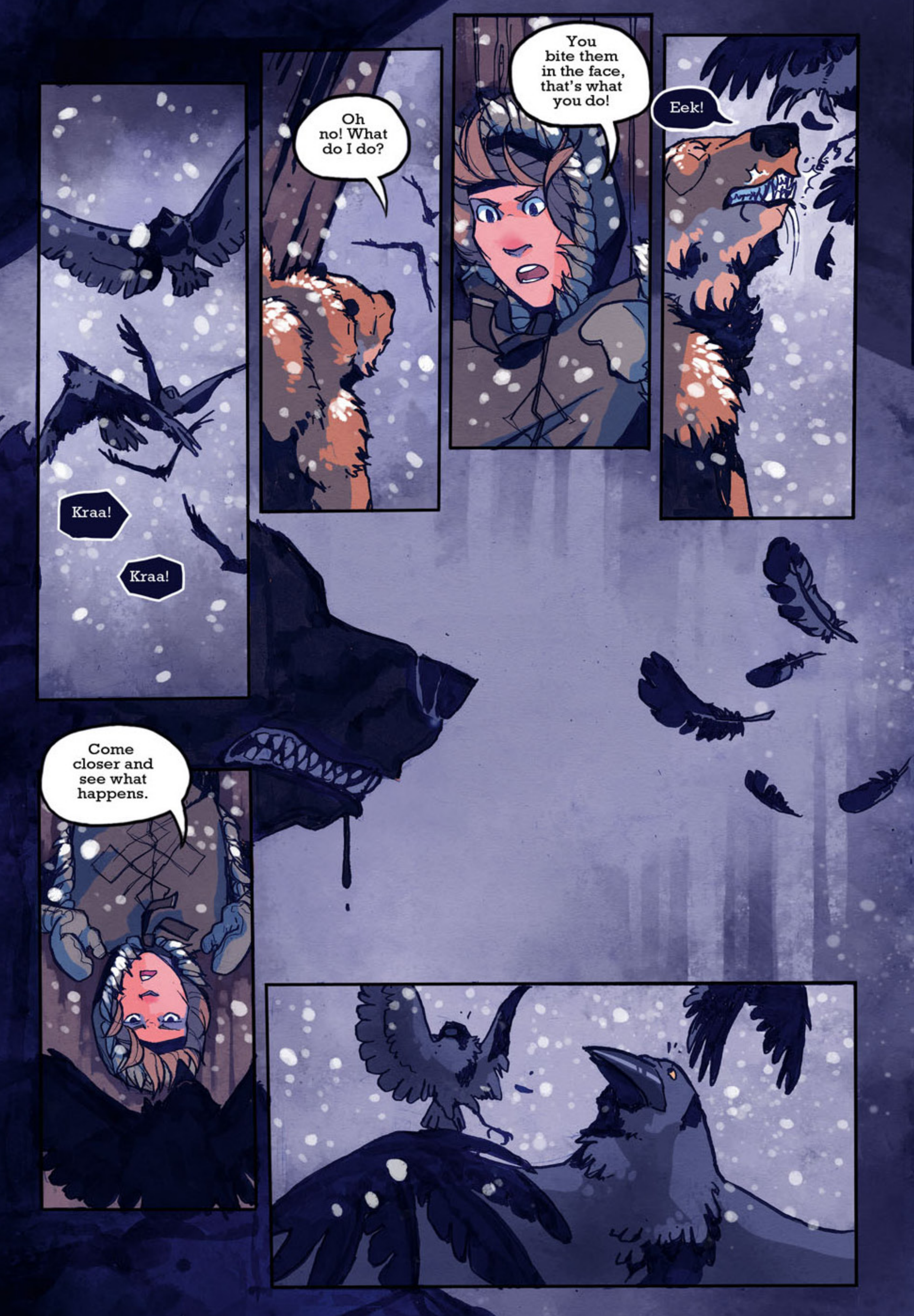

?
So... how did you plan for me to get down from here?
The same way you got up, except in reverse?

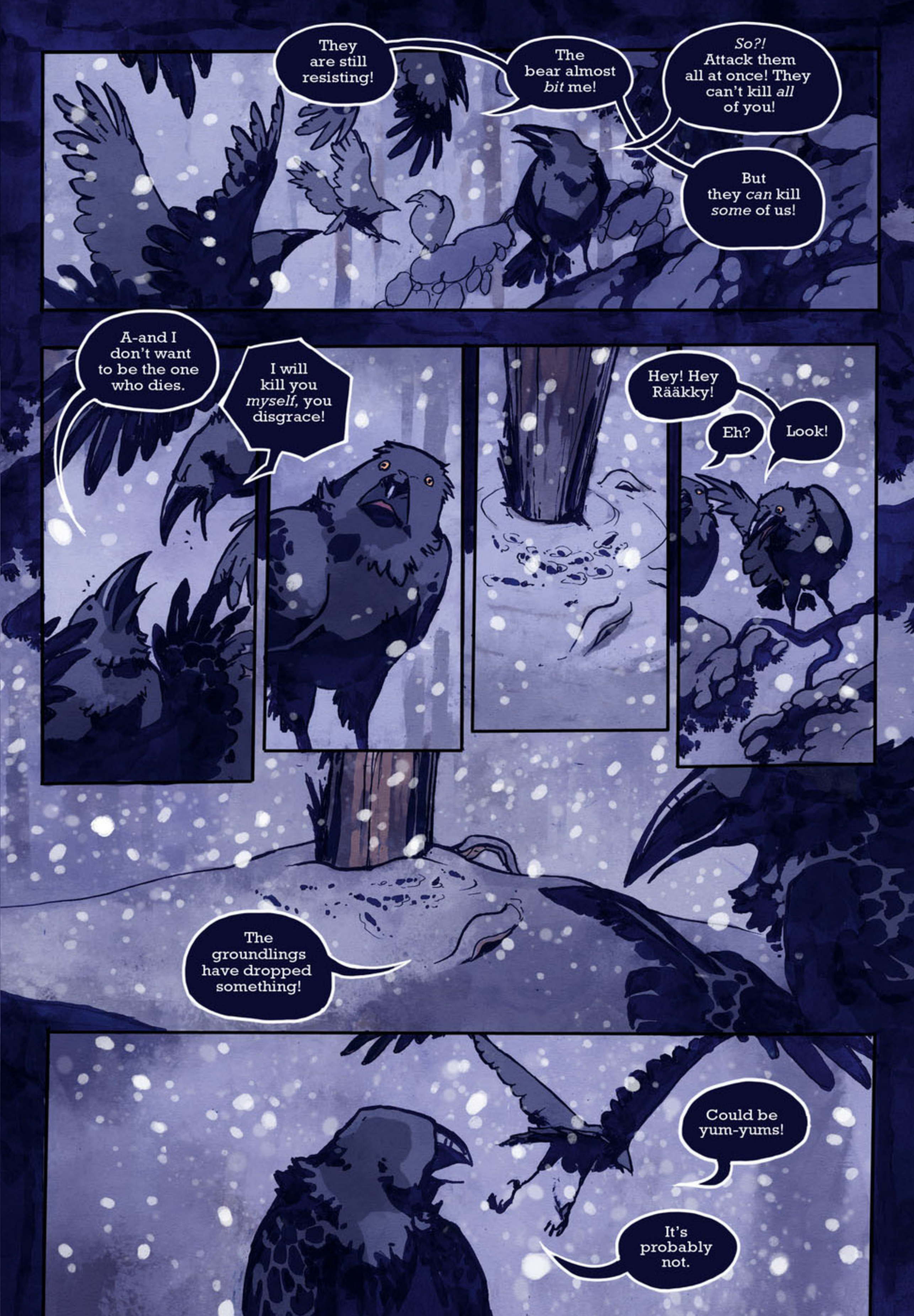

That's an awful idea...but *fine!*
Just a little bit farther, you can do it!
No need to worry, I've got you.

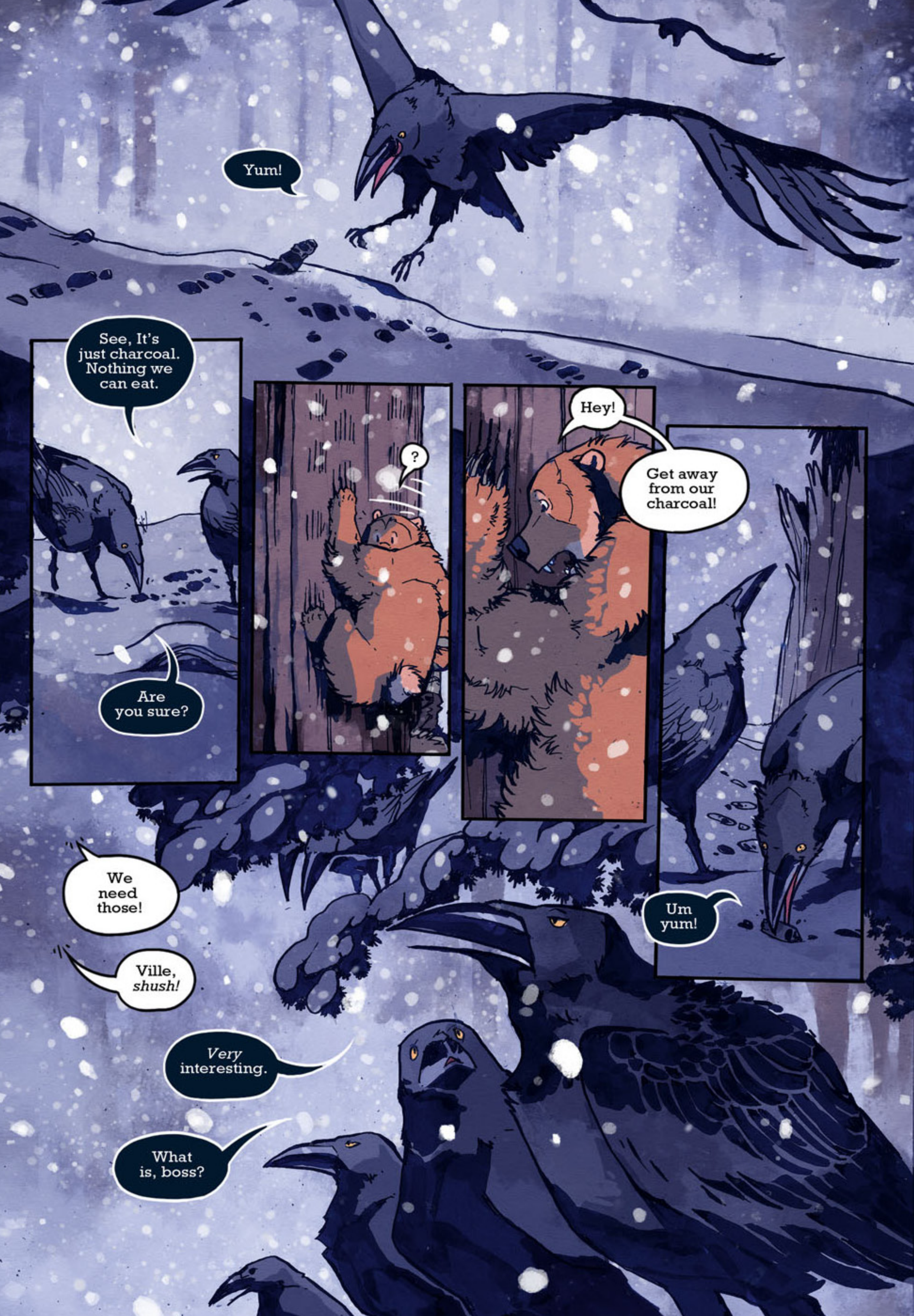

WHAM
KRAK!!
KRRRR!!!

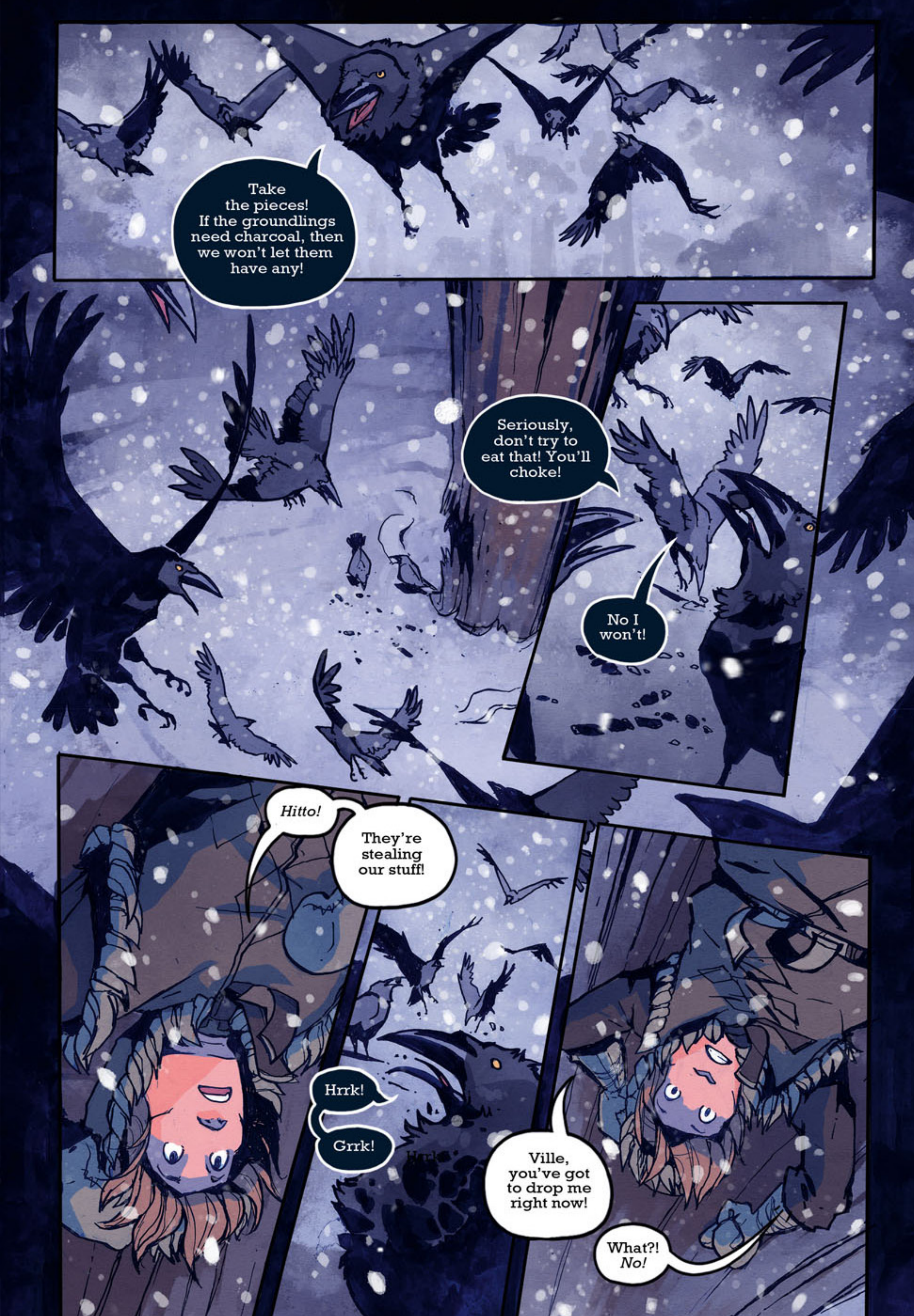

Hnngh!
EAA!!!
Don't panic! I can still get us down, I promise!
No you can't! We're going to die, I knew it all along!

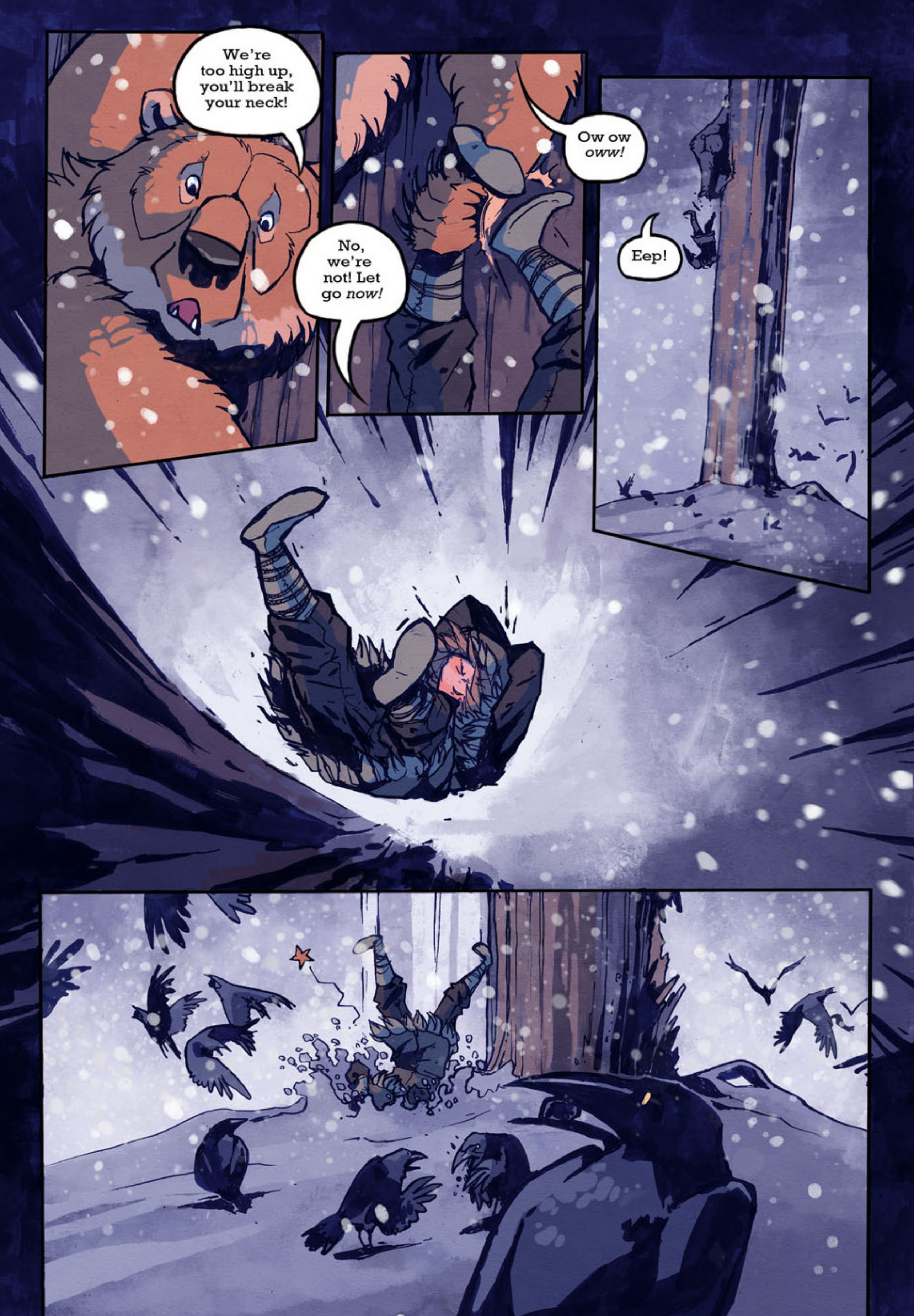

I'll just have to accept death.
See? They're vulnerable now!
We should attack!
Hrrrm.
They *slaughtered* one of ours!
I don't care. Kurri was ugly and stupid.
Sooner or later I would have killed him myself.
But I'm hungry.
Go get them.

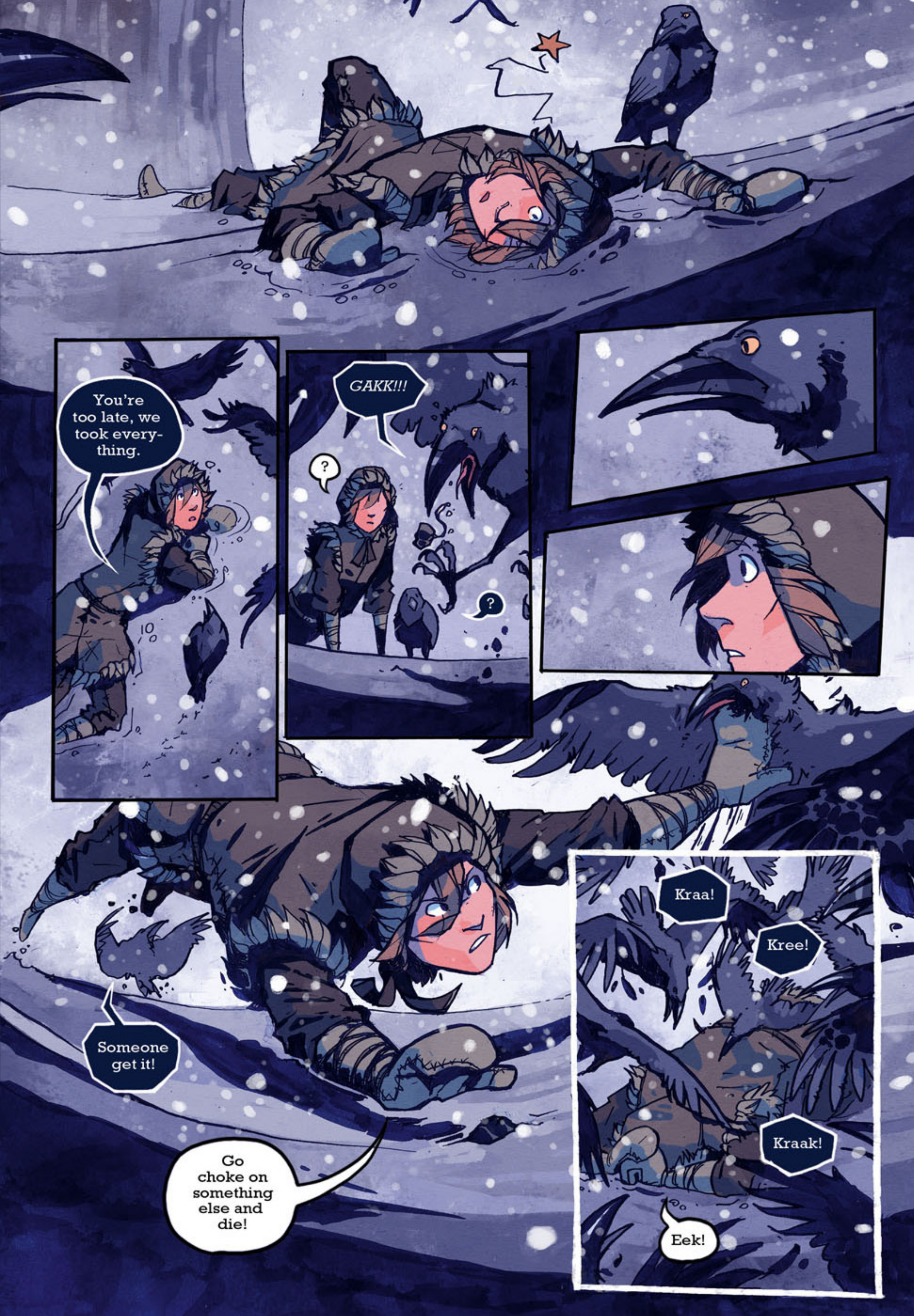

Kraa!
Kraa!
Oh no! What do I do?
You bite them in the face, that's what you do!
Eek!
Come closer and see what happens.

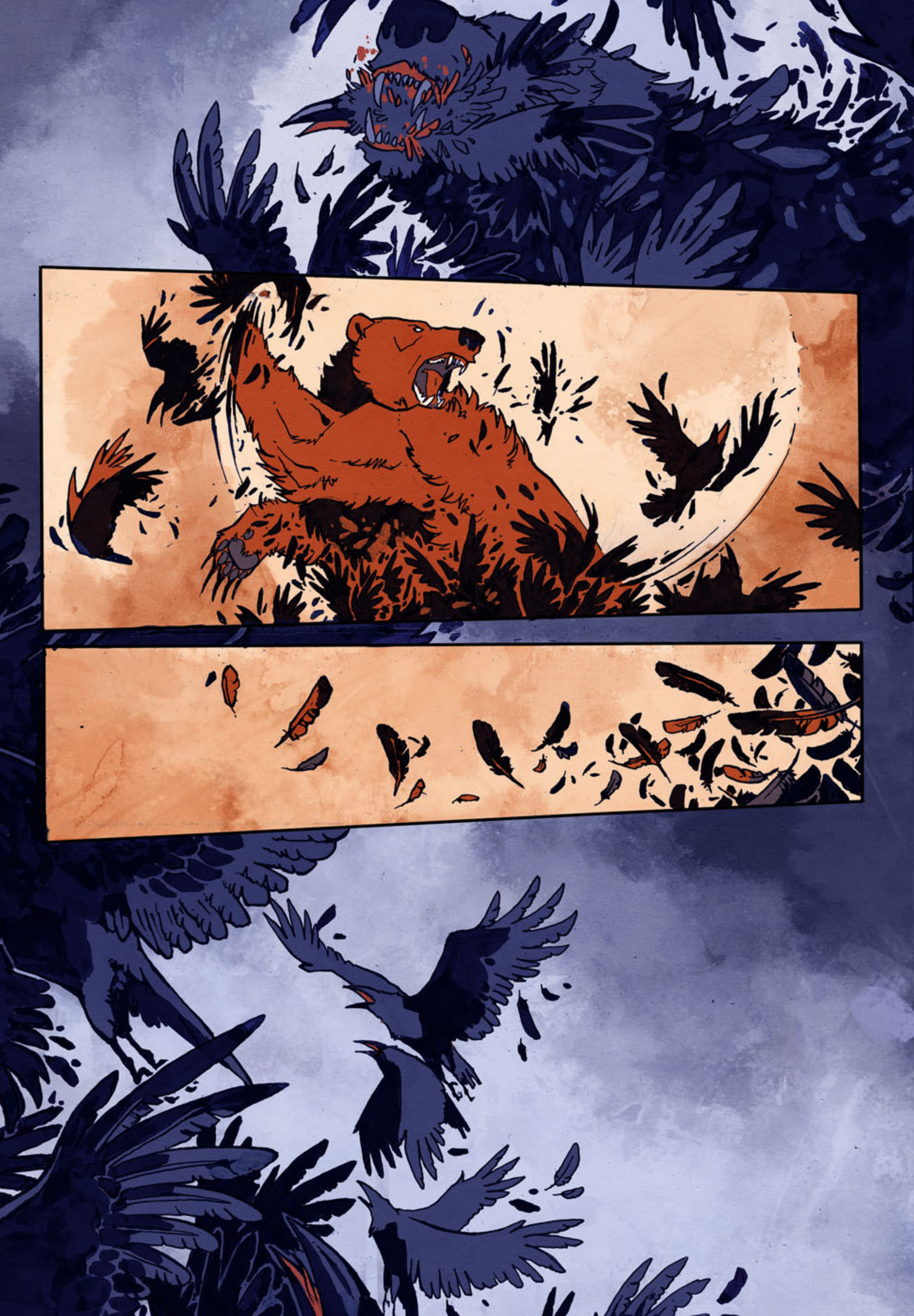

They are still resisting!
The bear almost *bit* me!
So?! Attack them all at once! They can't kill *all* of you!
But they *can* kill *some* of us!
A-and I don't want to be the one who dies.
I will kill you *myself*, you disgrace!
Hey! Hey Rääkky!
Eh?
Look!
The groundlings have dropped something!
Could be yum-yums!
It's probably not.

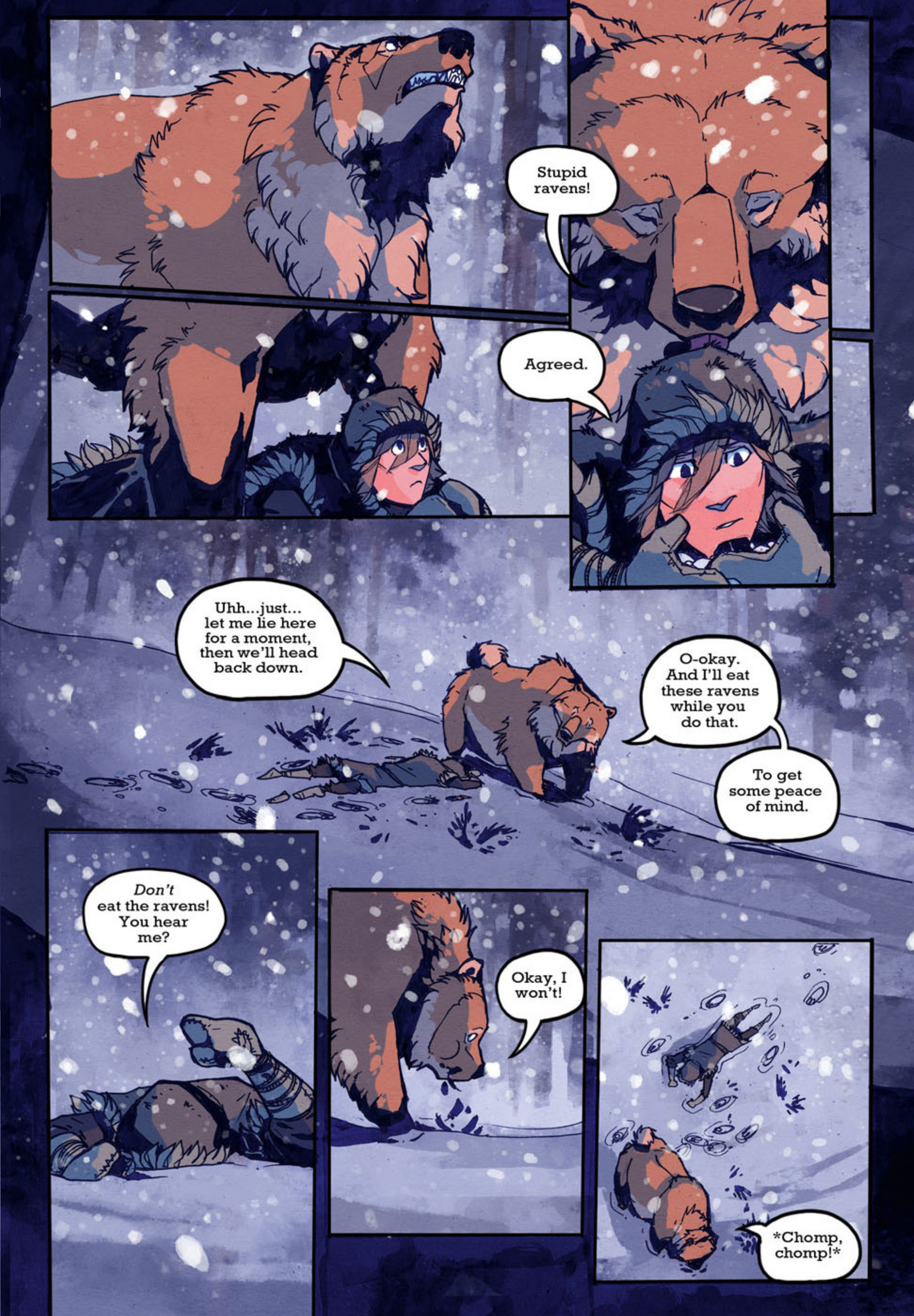

Yum!
See, It's just charcoal. Nothing we can eat.
Are you sure?
?
Hey!
Get away from our charcoal!
Um yum!
We need those!
Ville, *shush!*
Very interesting.
What is, boss?

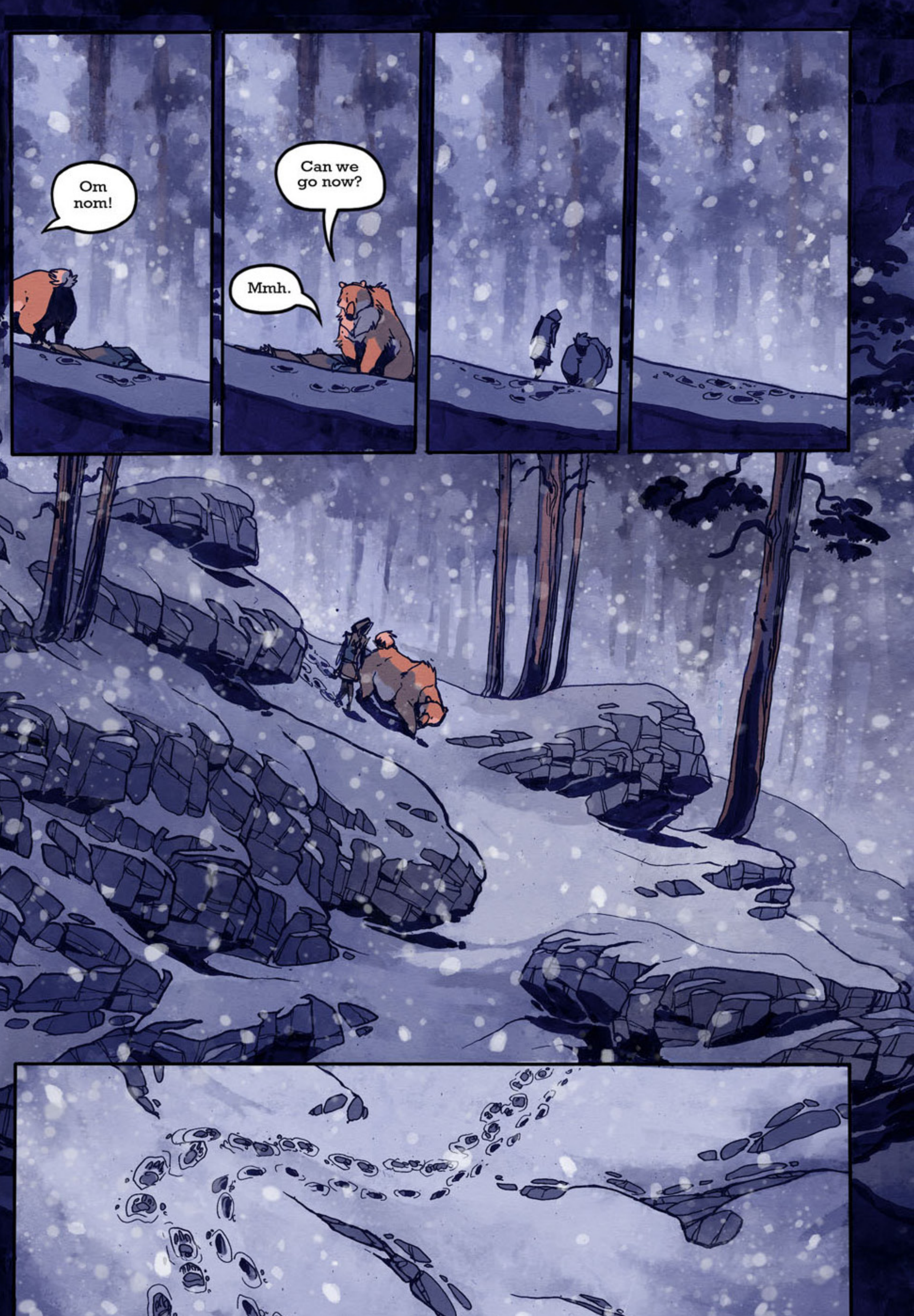

Take the pieces! If the groundlings need charcoal, then we won't let them have any!
Seriously, don't try to eat that! You'll choke!
No I won't!
Hitto!
They're stealing our stuff!
Hrrk!
Grrk!
Hark
Ville, you've got to drop me right now!
What?! *No!*

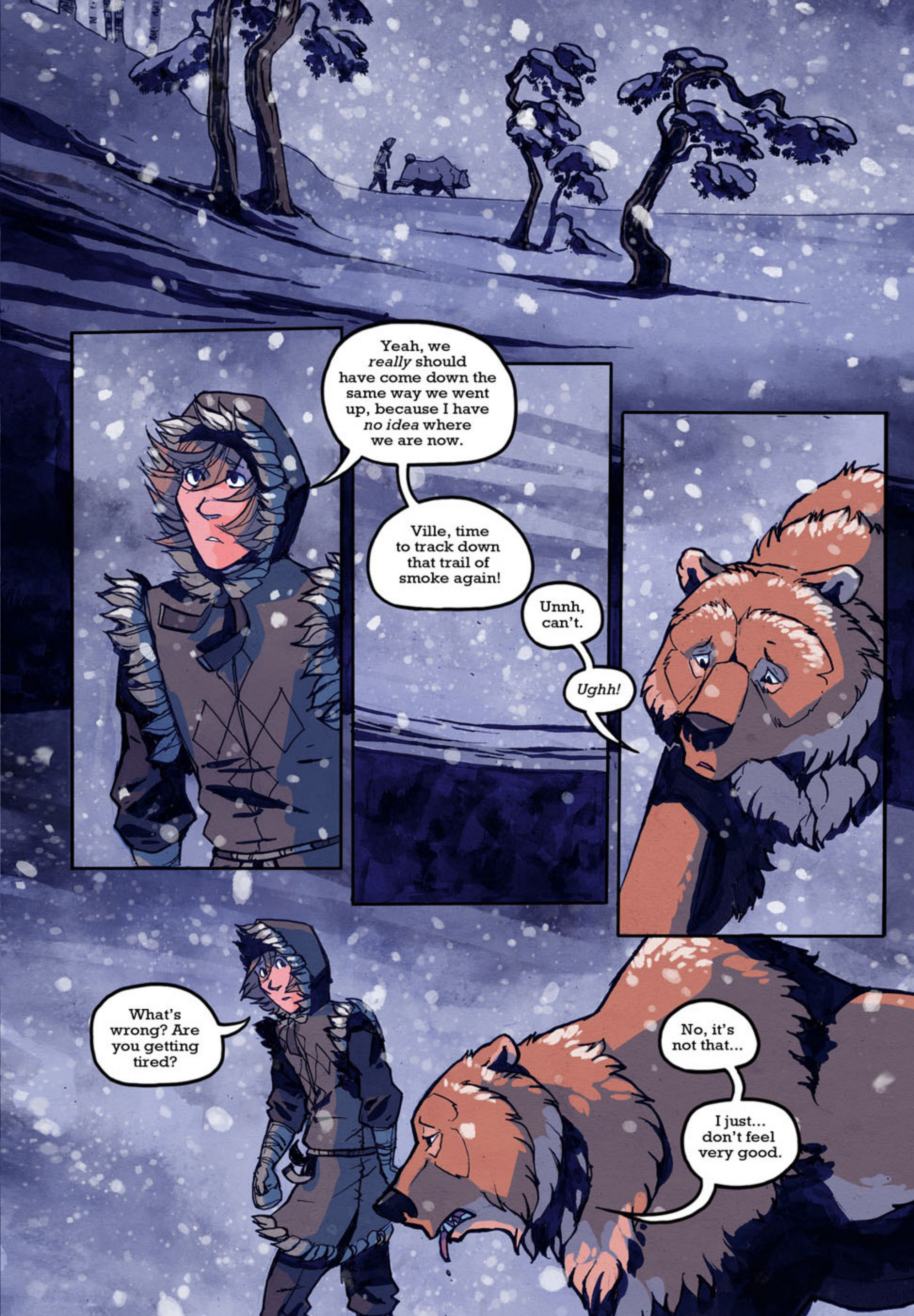

We're too high up, you'll break your neck!
Ow ow *oww!*
No, we're not! Let go *now!*
Eep!

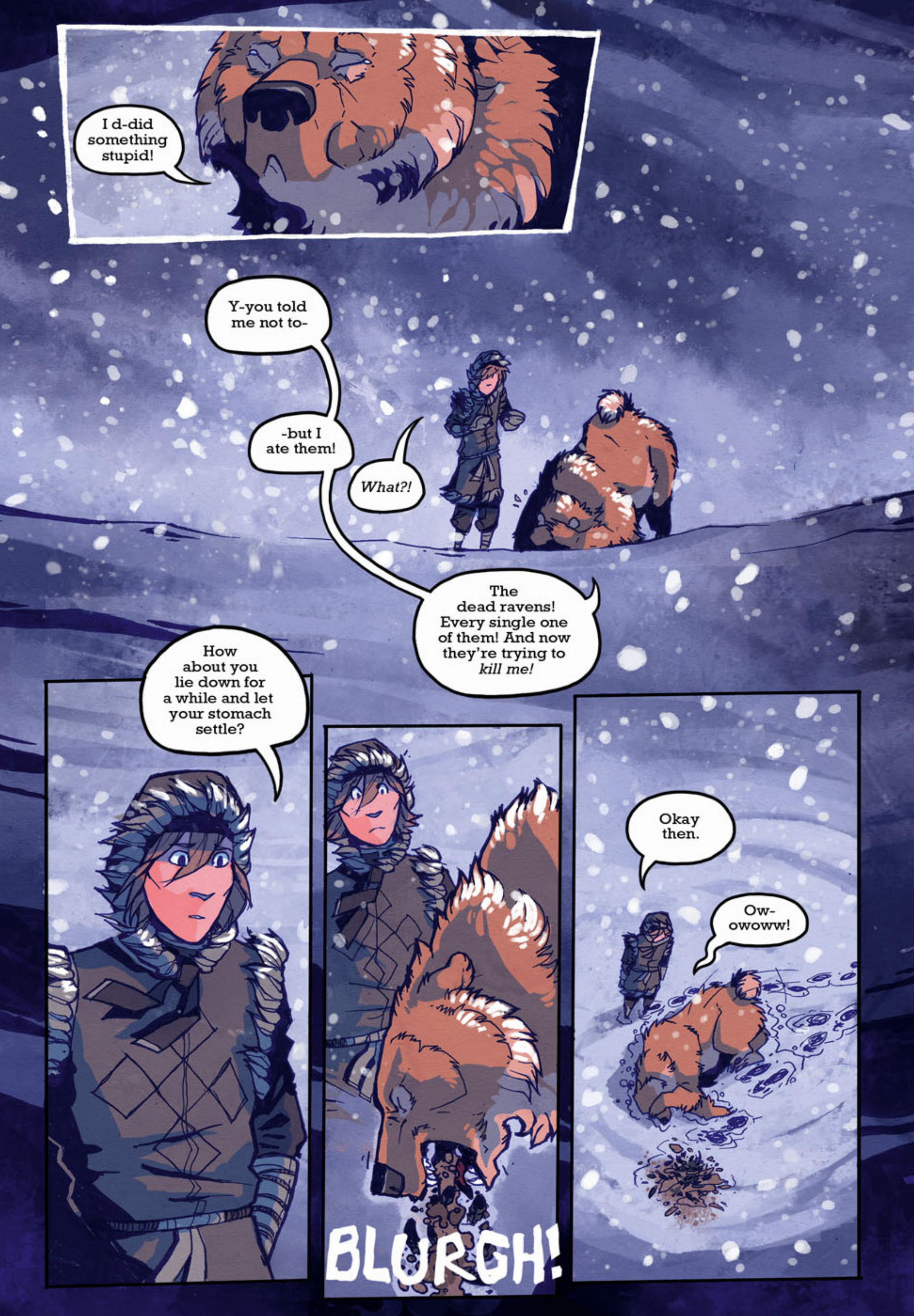

You're too late, we took everything.
?
GAKK!!!
?
Someone get it!
Go choke on something else and die!
Kraa!
Kree!
Kraak!
Eek!

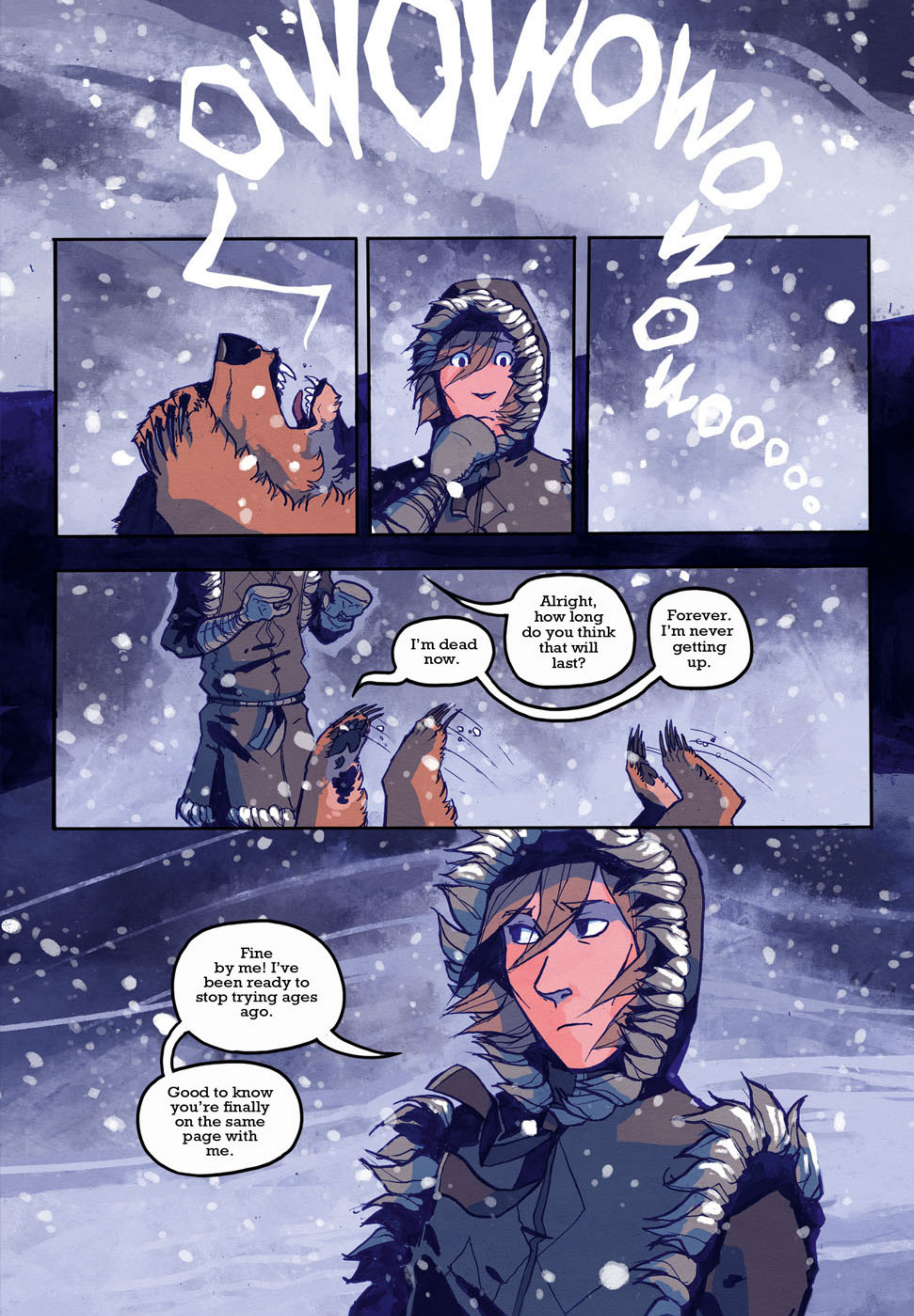


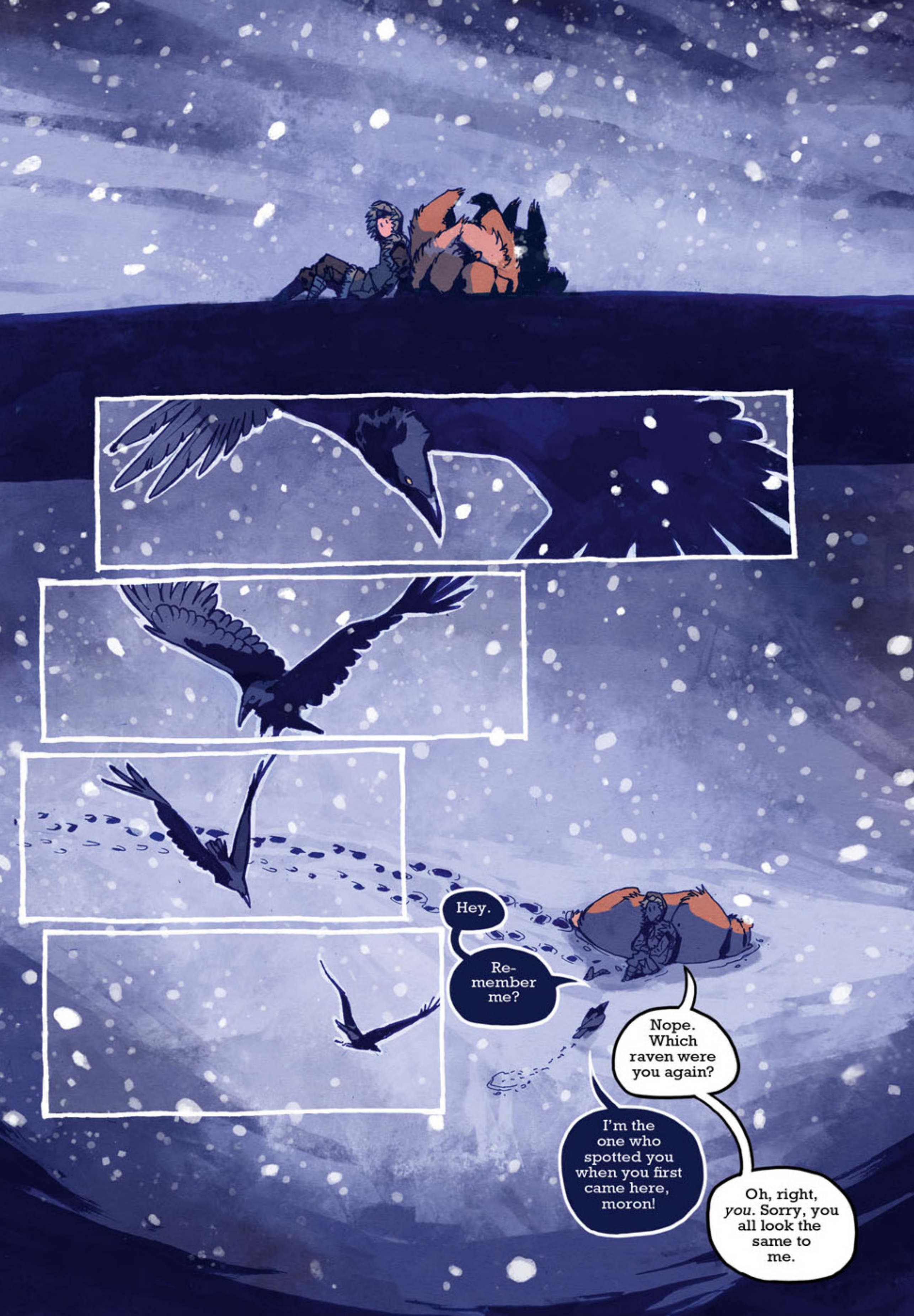

Stupid ravens!
Agreed.
Uhh...just... let me lie here for a moment, then we'll head back down.
O-okay. And I'll eat these ravens while you do that.
To get some peace of mind.
Don't eat the ravens! You hear me?
Okay, I won't!
Chomp, chomp!

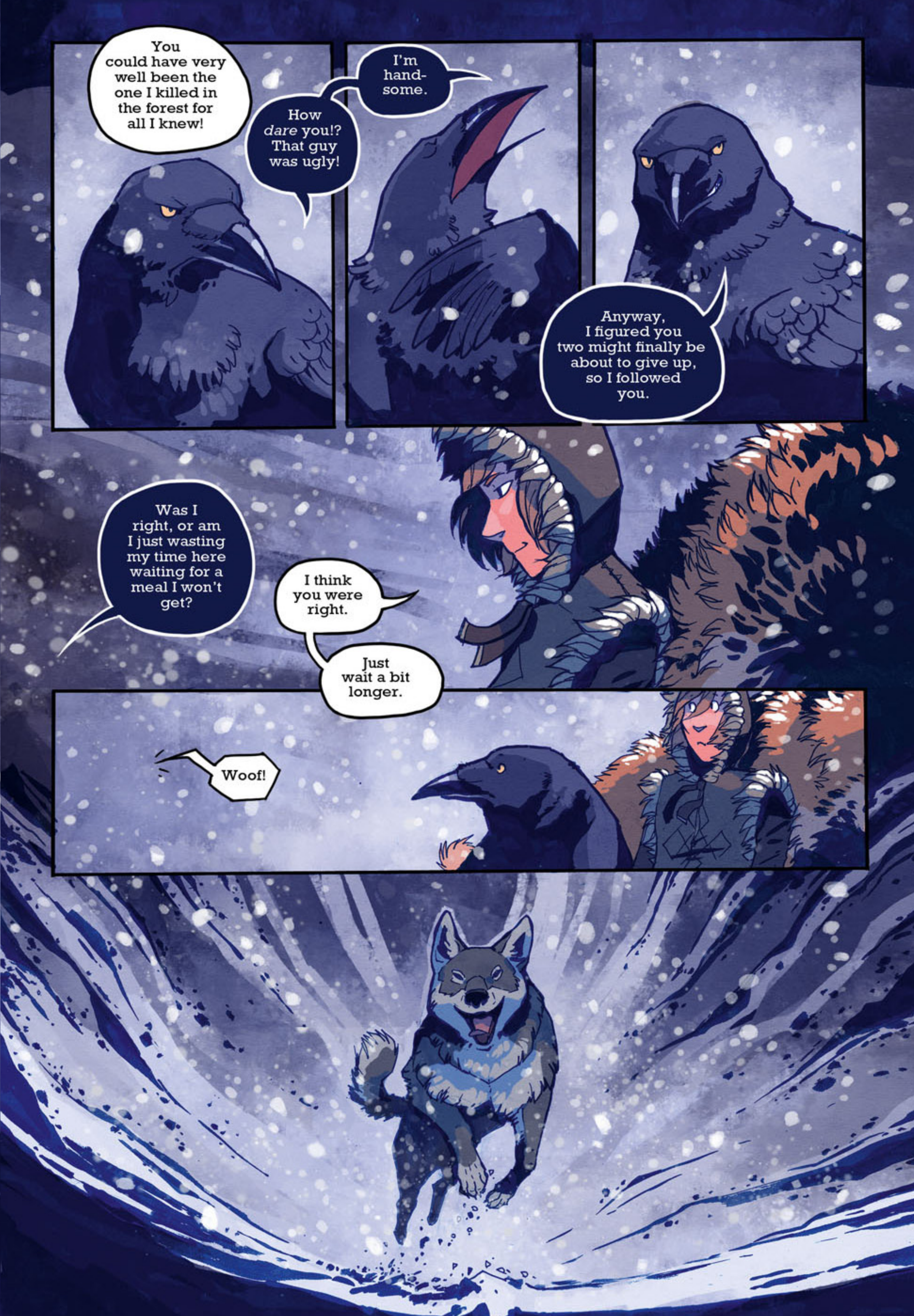

Om nom!
Can we go now?
Mmh.

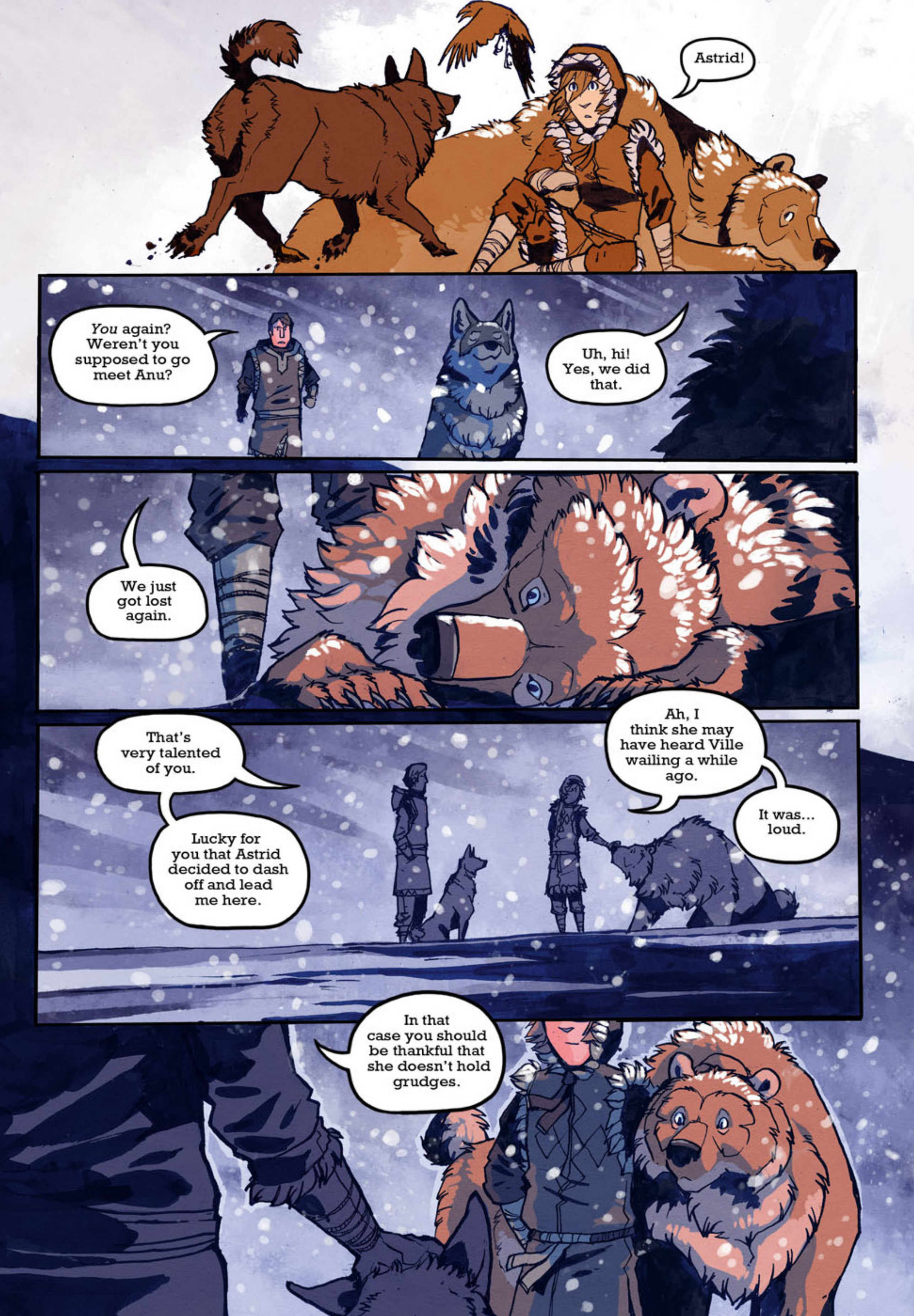

Yeah, we *really* should have come down the same way we went up, because I have *no idea* where we are now.
Ville, time to track down that trail of smoke again!
Unnh, can't.
Ughh!
What's wrong? Are you getting tired?
No, it's not that...
I just... don't feel very good.

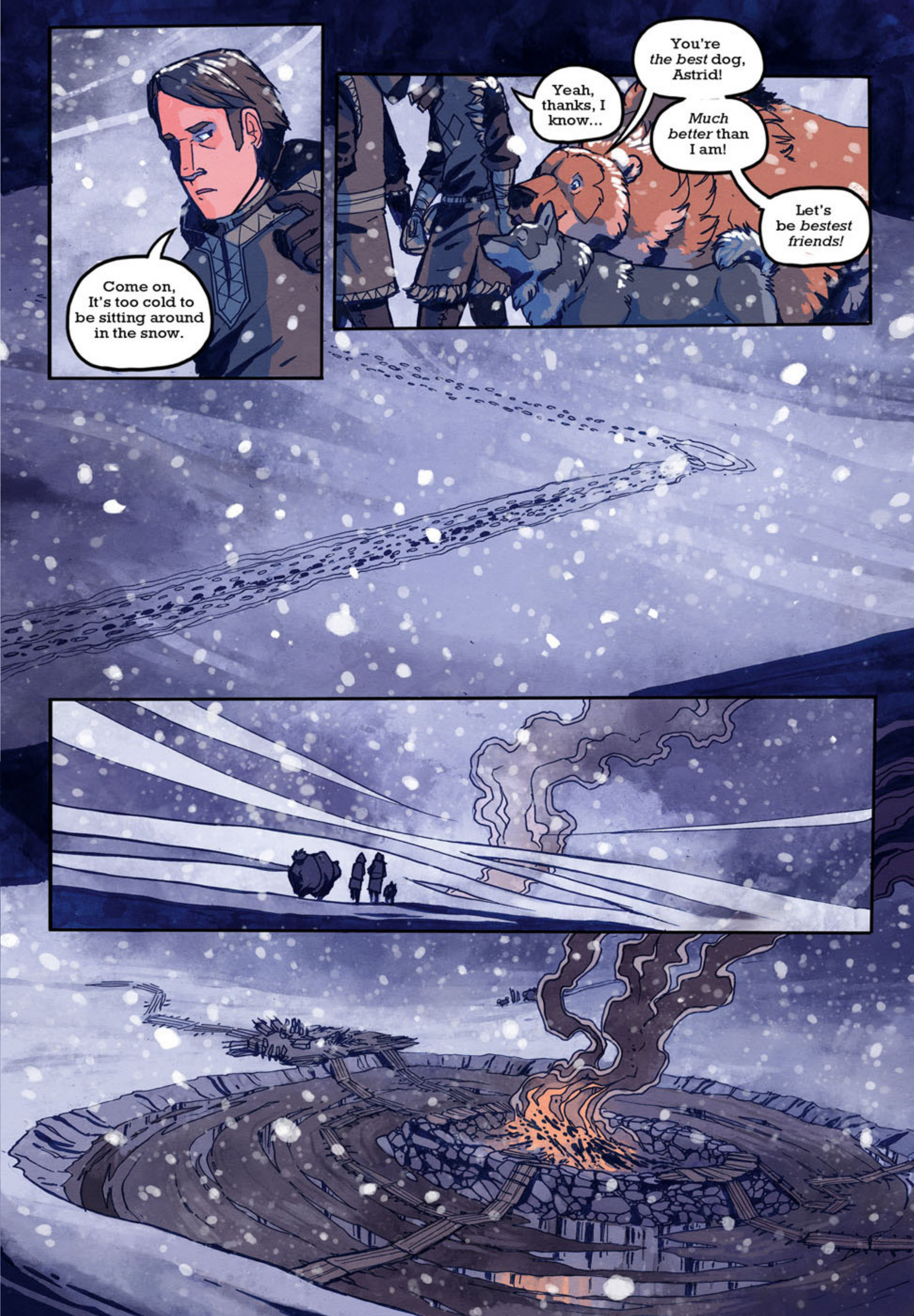

I d-did something stupid!
Y-you told me not to-
-but I ate them!
What?!
The dead ravens! Every single one of them! And now they're trying to *kill me!*
How about you lie down for a while and let your stomach settle?
BLURGH!
Okay then.
Ow-owoww!

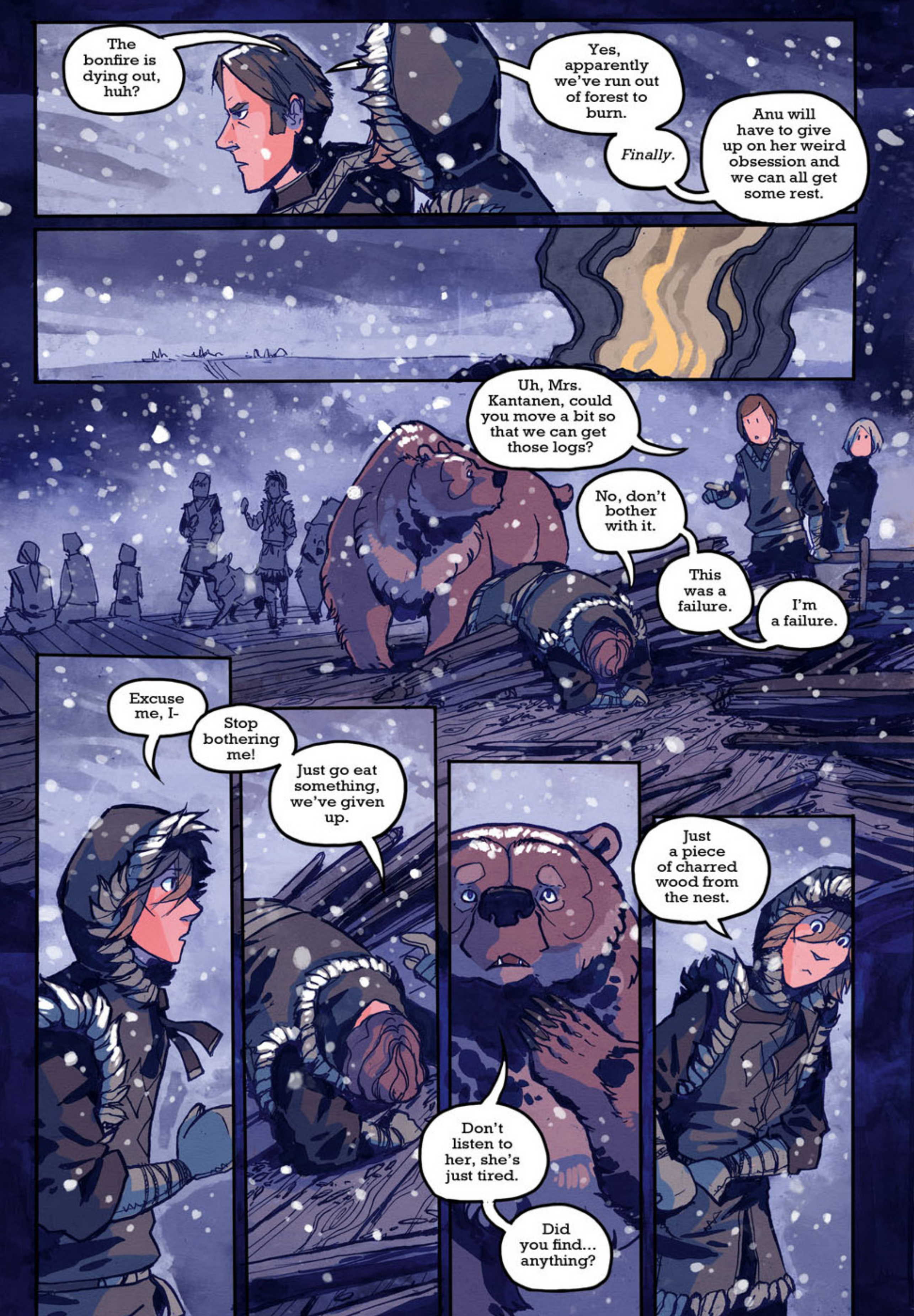

OWOWOWOWOWOWOOOOO
Alright, how long do you think that will last?
I'm dead now.
Forever. I'm never getting up.
Fine by me! I've been ready to stop trying ages ago.
Good to know you're finally on the same page with me.

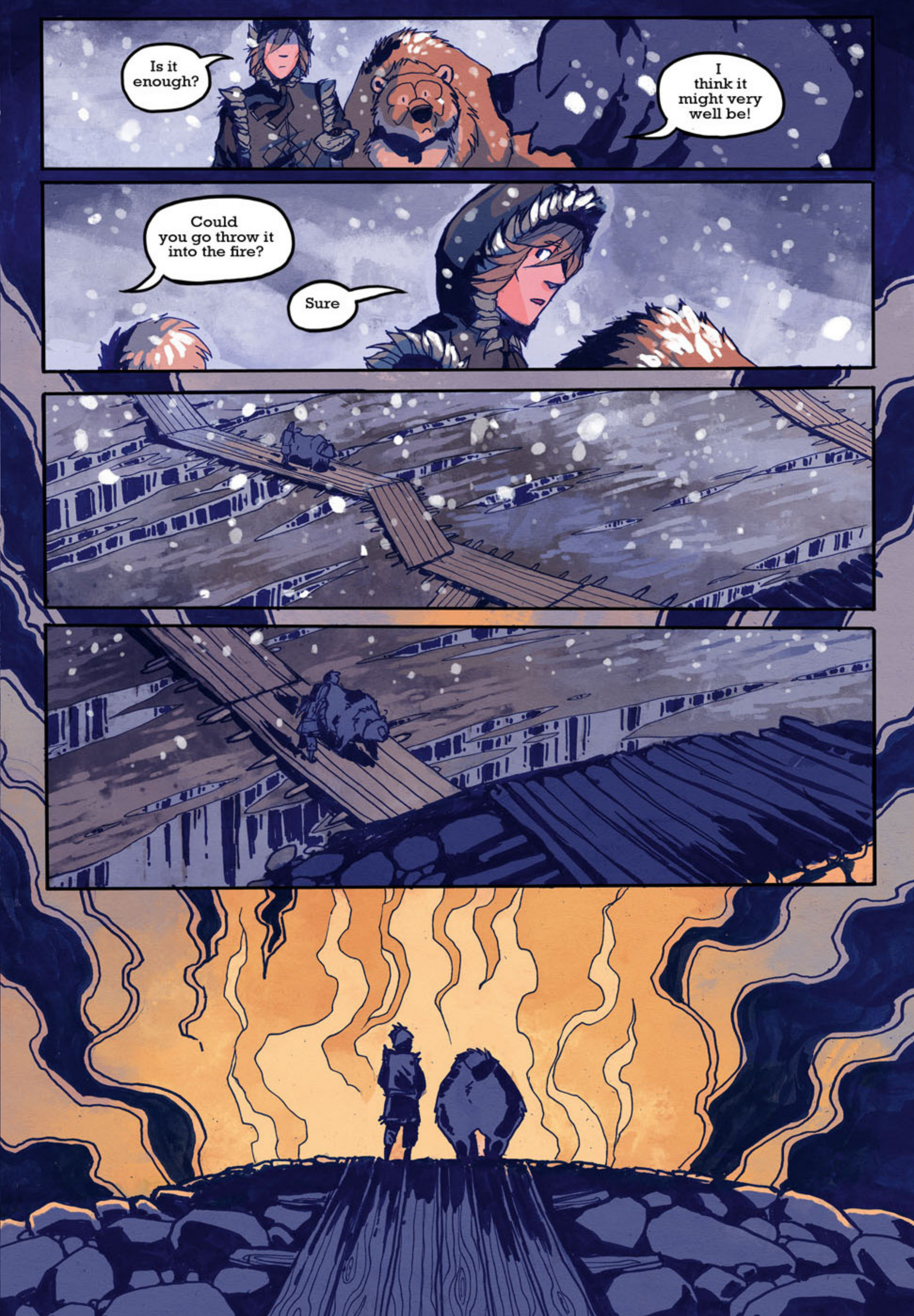

Hey.
Re-member me?
Nope. Which raven were you again?
I'm the one who spotted you when you first came here, moron!
Oh, right, *you*. Sorry, you all look the same to me.

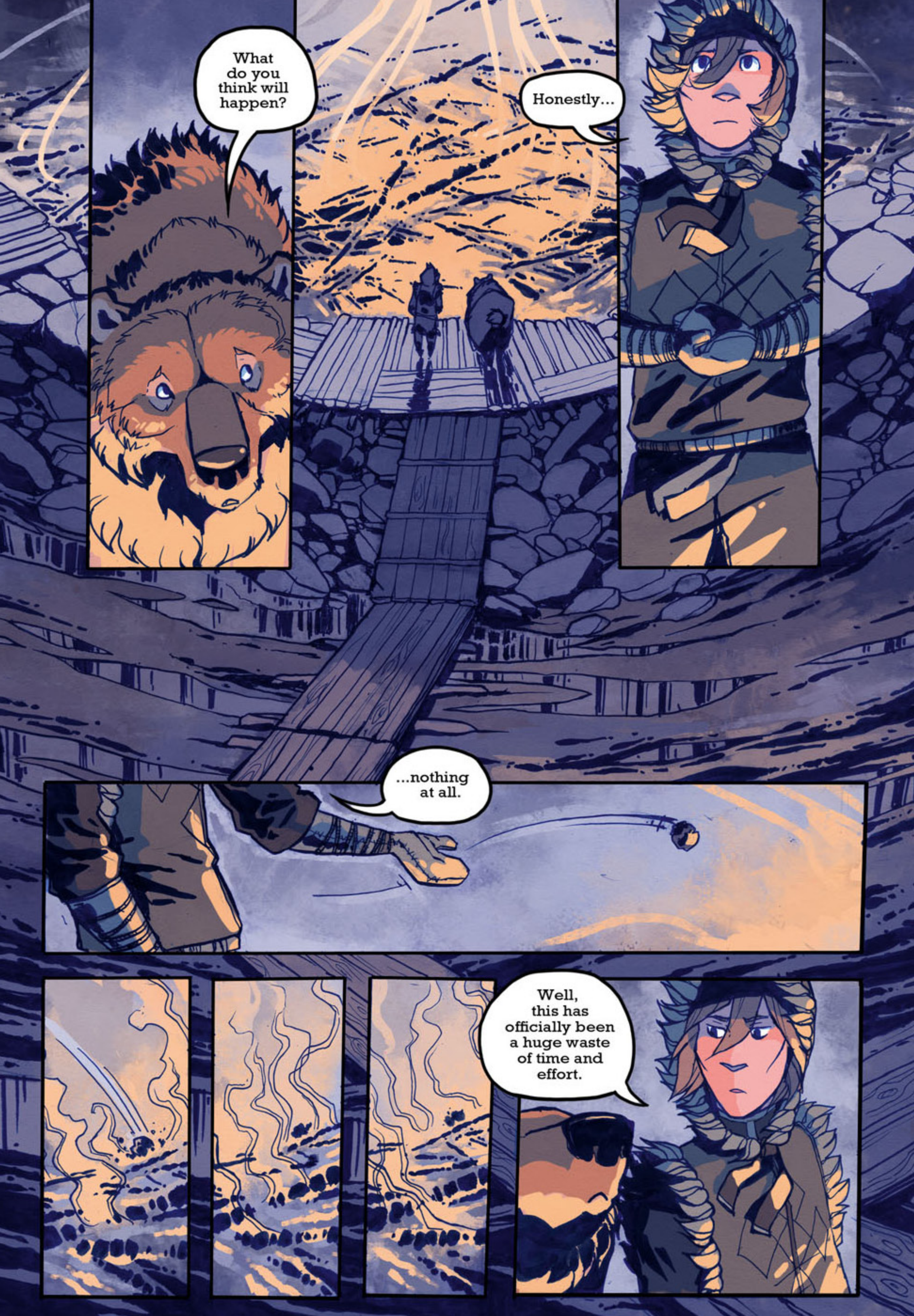

You could have very well been the one I killed in the forest for all I knew!
How *dare* you!? That guy was ugly!
I'm handsome.
Anyway, I figured you two might finally be about to give up, so I followed you.
Was I right, or am I just wasting my time here waiting for a meal I won't get?
I think you were right.
Just wait a bit longer.
Woof!

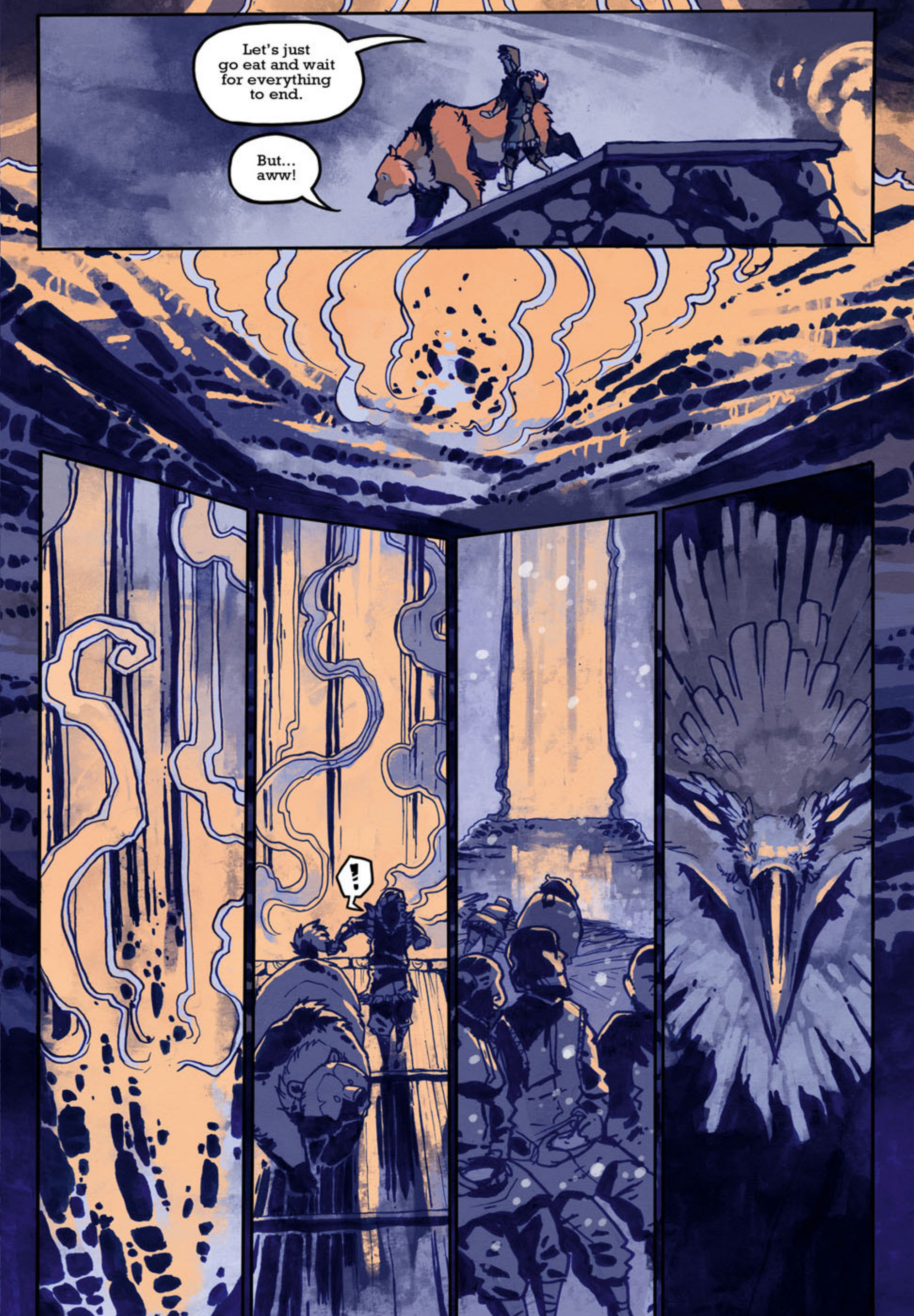

Astrid!
You again? Weren't you supposed to go meet Anu?
Uh, hi! Yes, we did that.
We just got lost again.
That's very talented of you.
Lucky for you that Astrid decided to dash off and lead me here.
Ah, I think she may have heard Ville wailing a while ago.
It was... loud.
In that case you should be thankful that she doesn't hold grudges.

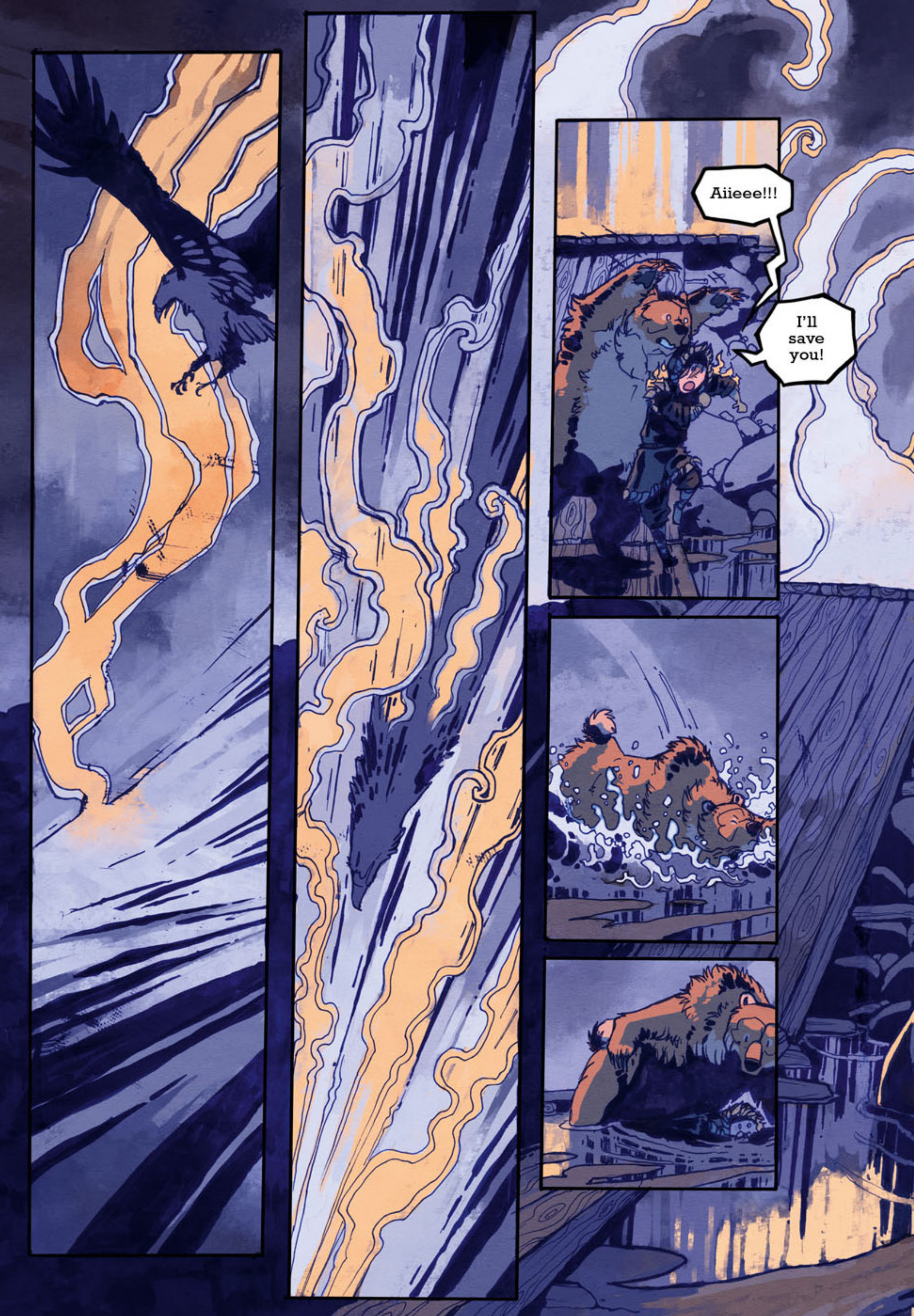

Come on, It's too cold to be sitting around in the snow.
You're *the best* dog, Astrid!
Yeah, thanks, I know...
Much better than I am!
Let's be *bestest friends!*

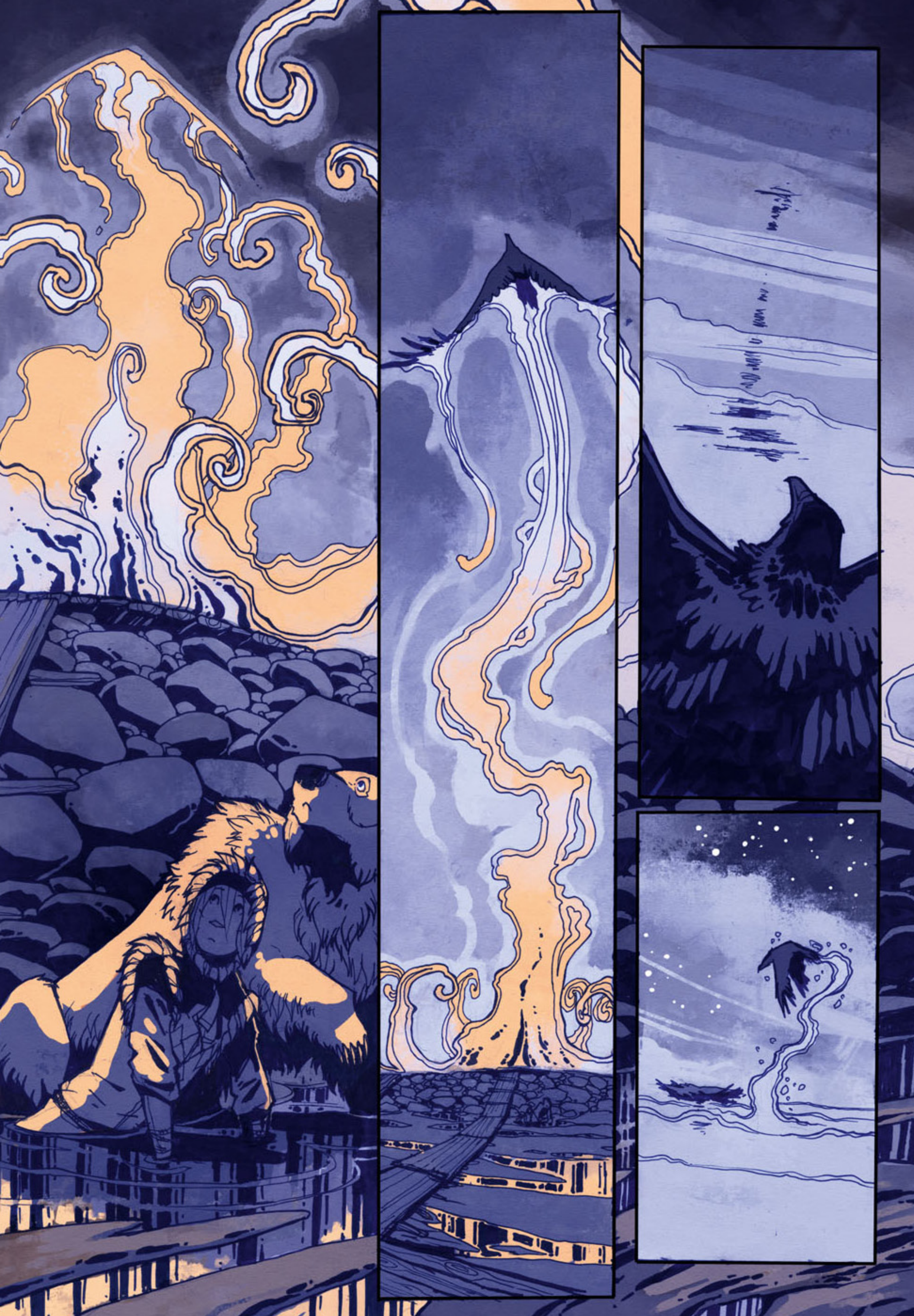

The bonfire is dying out, huh?
Yes, apparently we've run out of forest to burn.
Finally.
Anu will have to give up on her weird obsession and we can all get some rest.
Uh, Mrs. Kantanen, could you move a bit so that we can get those logs?
No, don't bother with it.
This was a failure.
I'm a failure.
Excuse me, I-
Stop bothering me!
Just go eat something, we've given up.
Don't listen to her, she's just tired.
Did you find... anything?
Just a piece of charred wood from the nest.

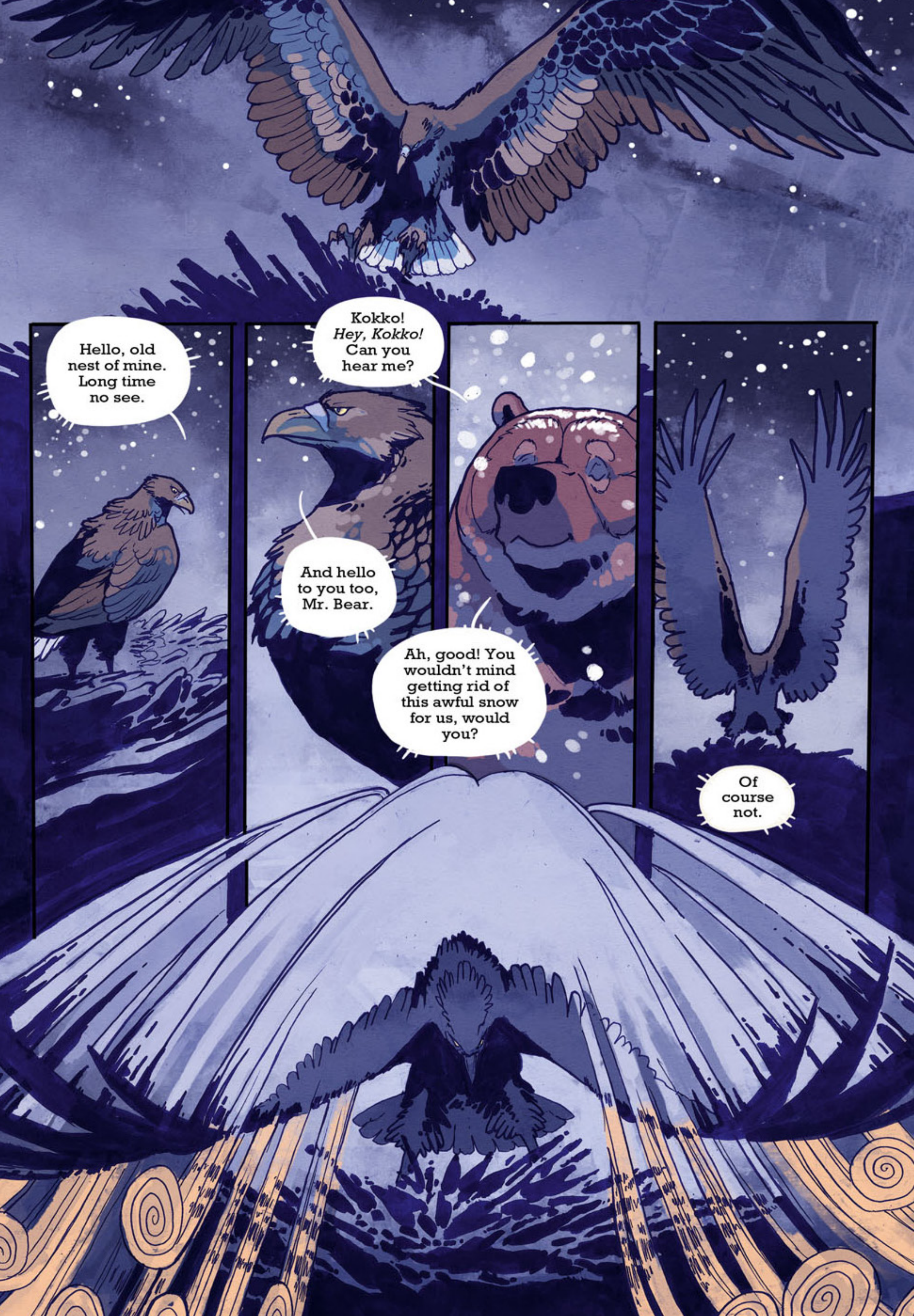

Is it enough?
I think it might very well be!
Could you go throw it into the fire?
Sure

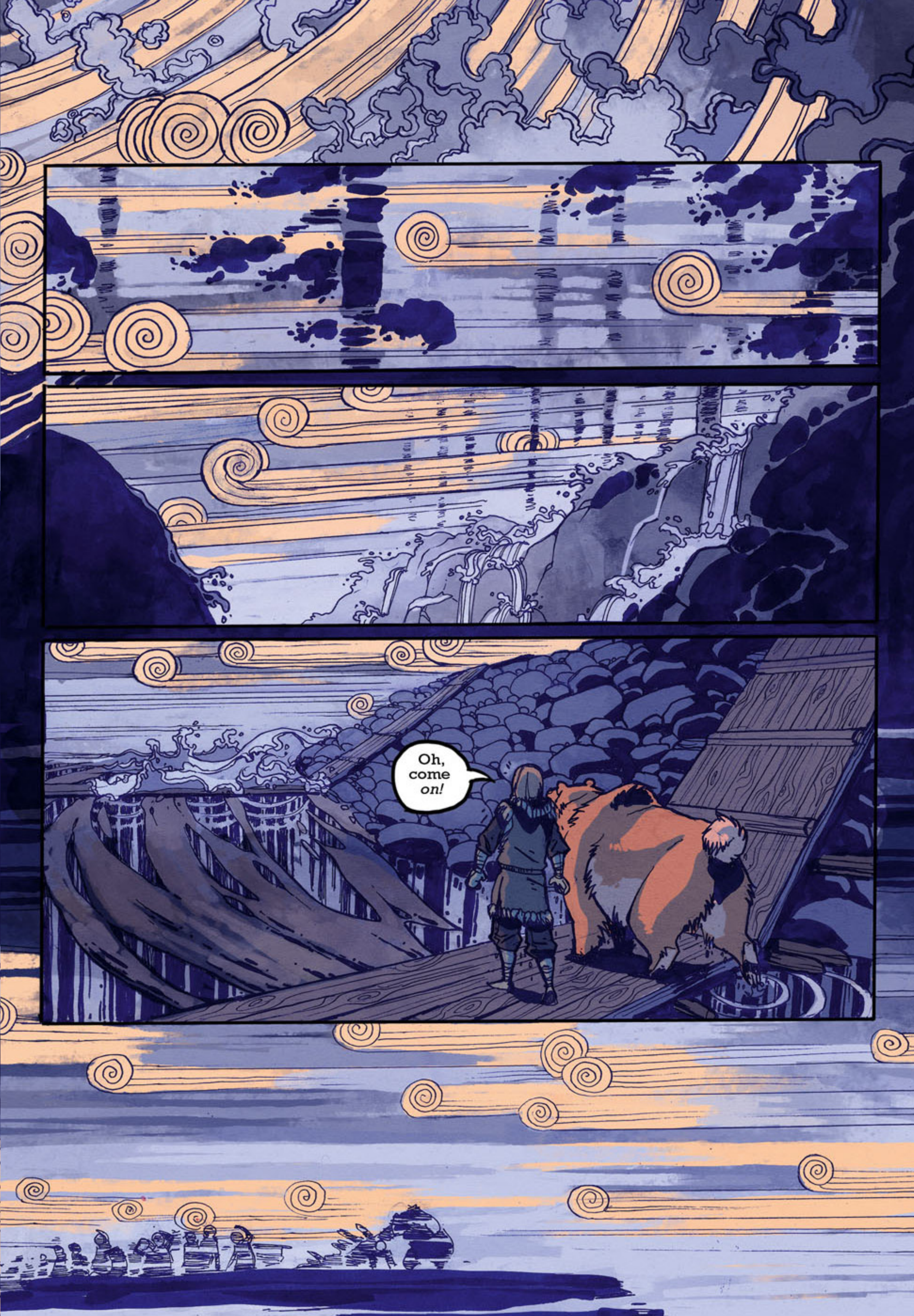

What do you think will happen?
Honestly...
...nothing at all.
Well, this has officially been a huge waste of time and effort.

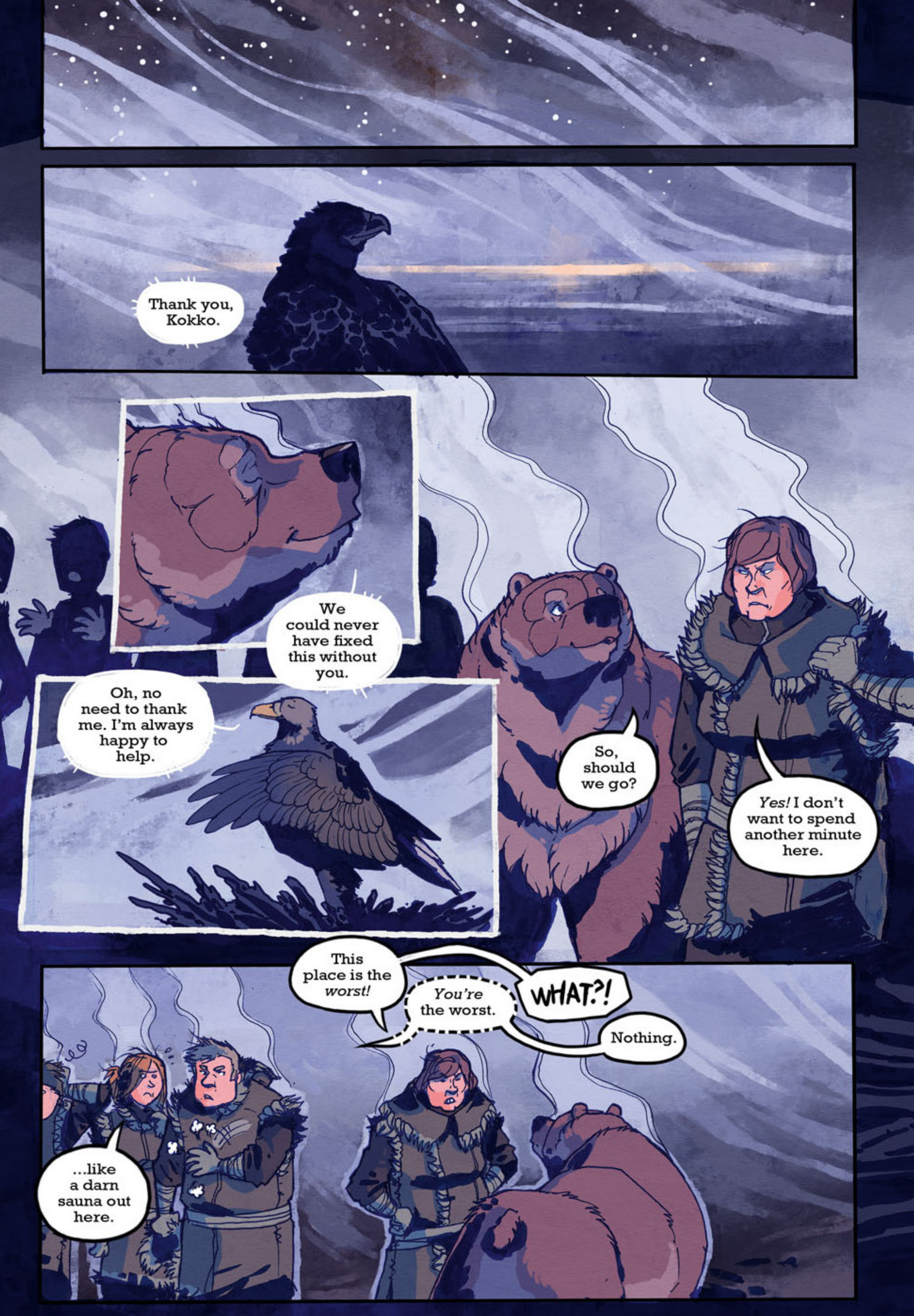

Let's just go eat and wait for everything to end.
But... aww!
!

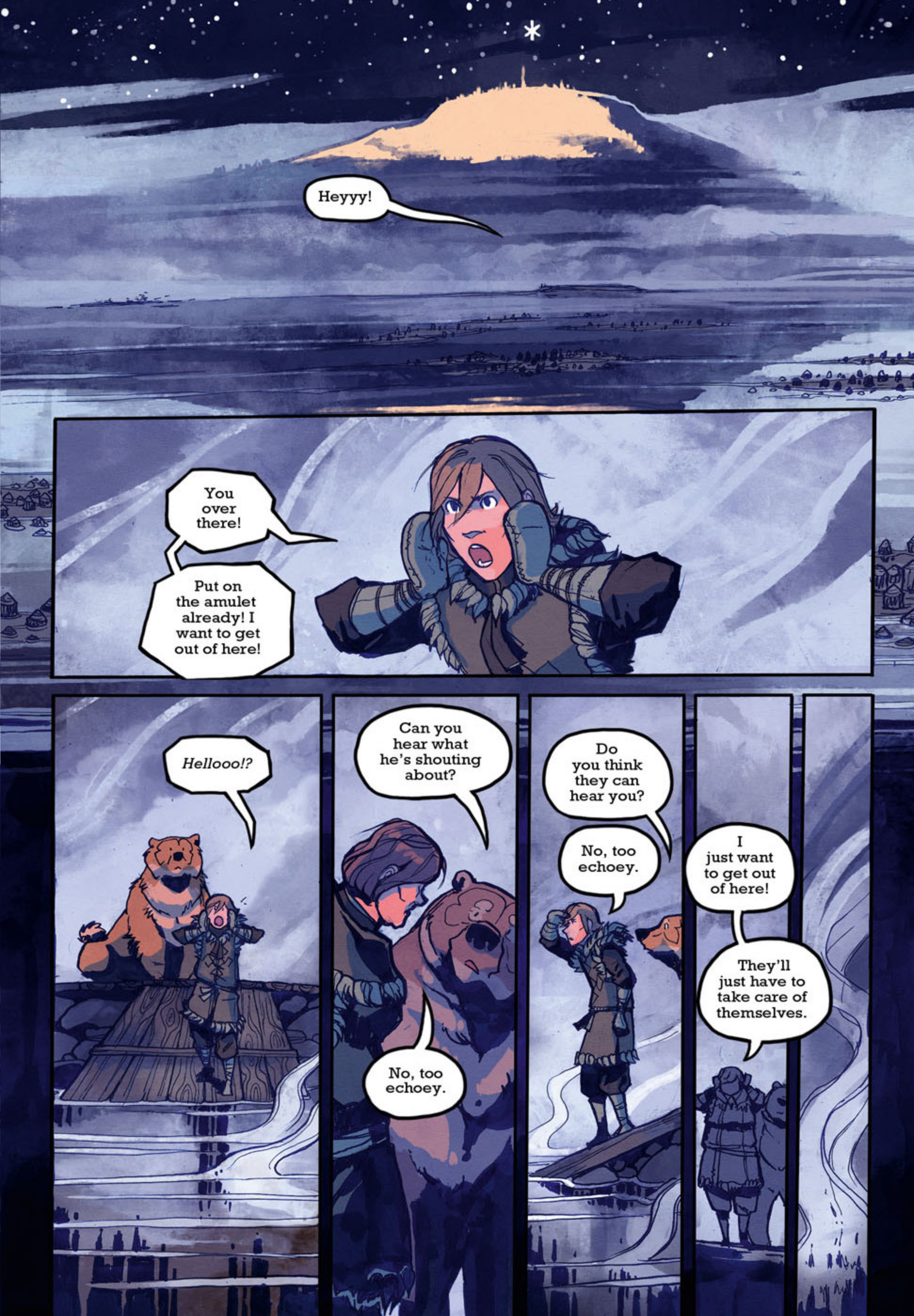

Aiieee!!!
I'll save you!

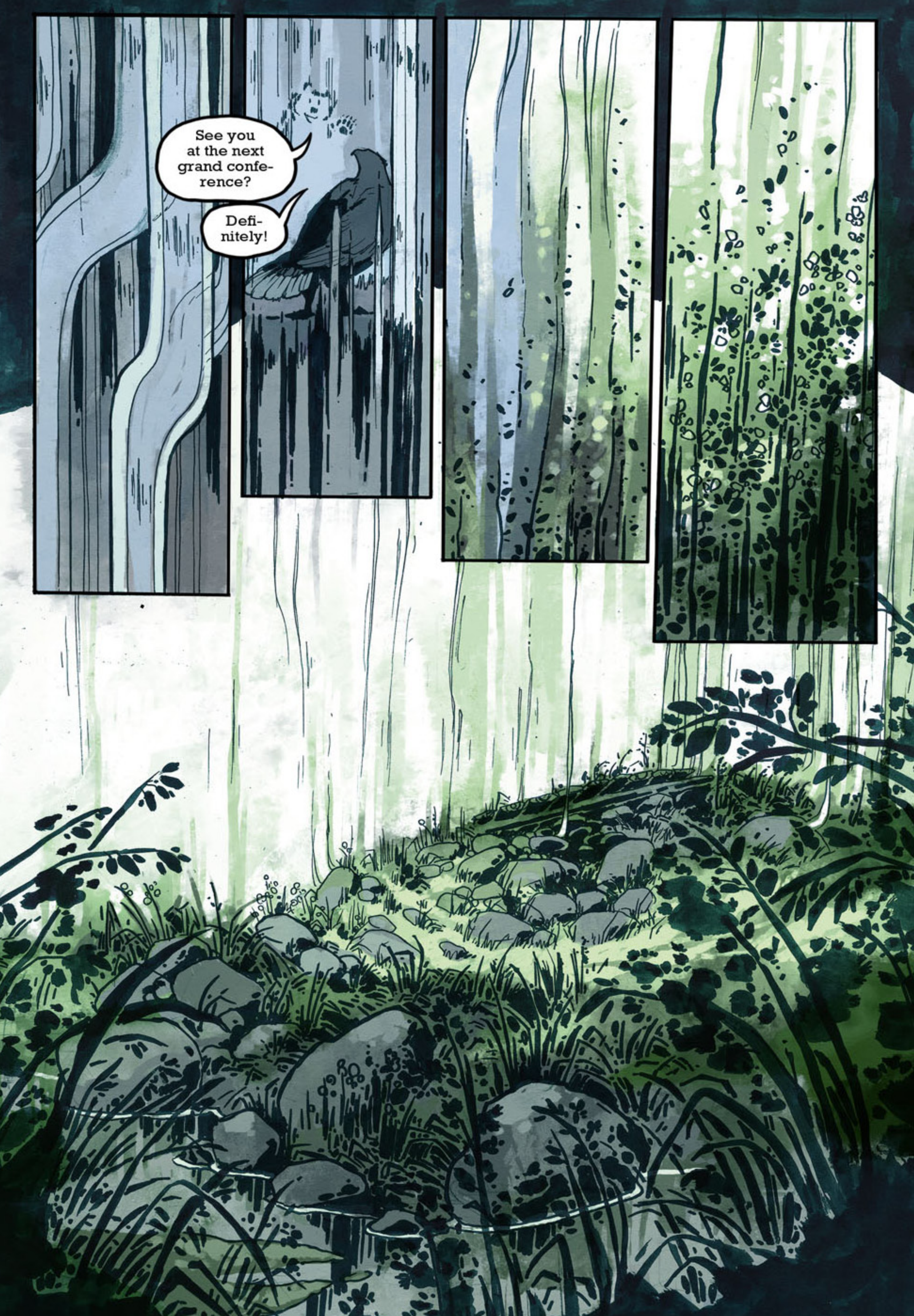


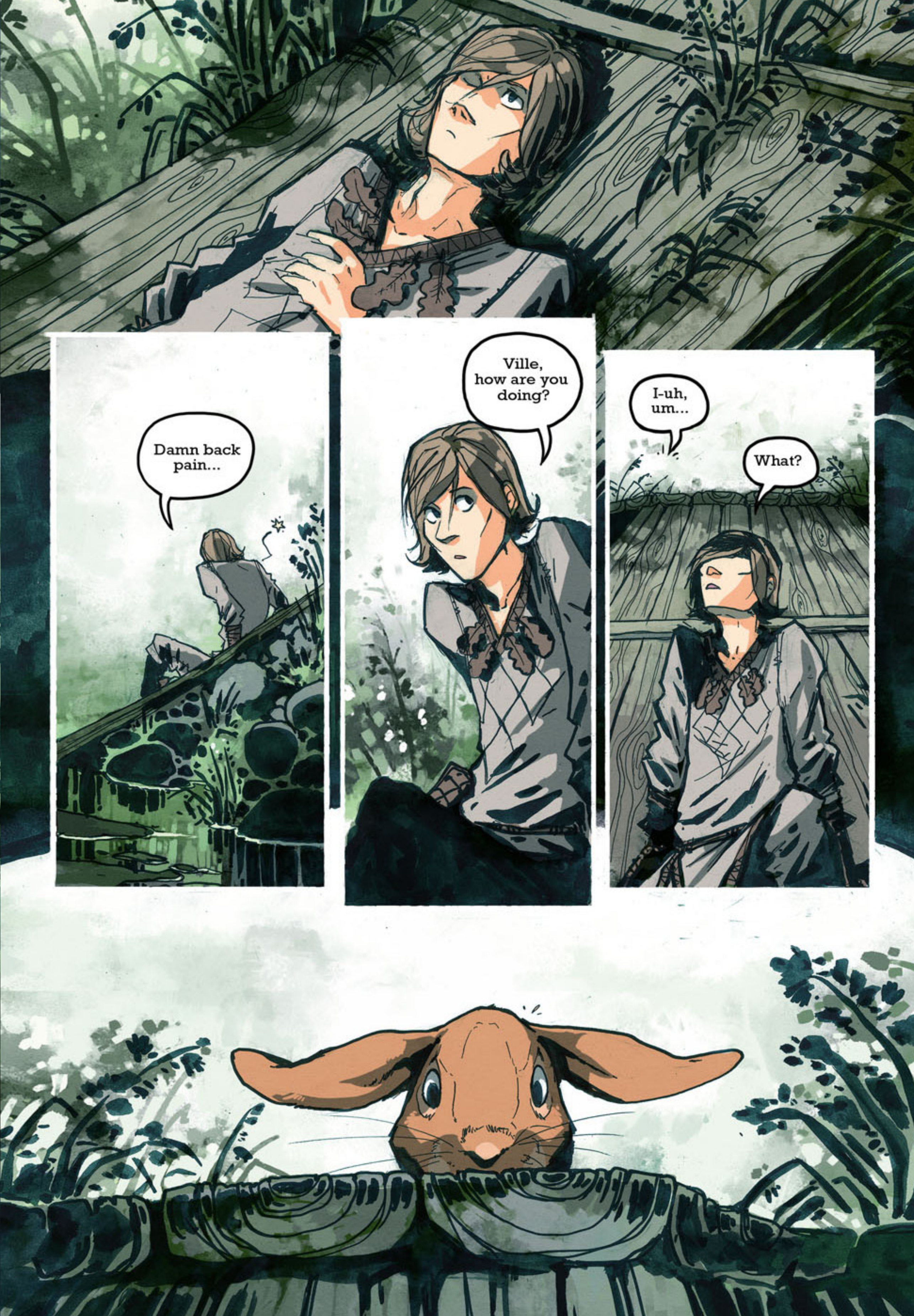

Hello, old nest of mine. Long time no see.
Kokko! *Hey, Kokko!* Can you hear me?
And hello to you too, Mr. Bear.
Ah, good! You wouldn't mind getting rid of this awful snow for us, would you?
Of course not.


Oh, come *on!*

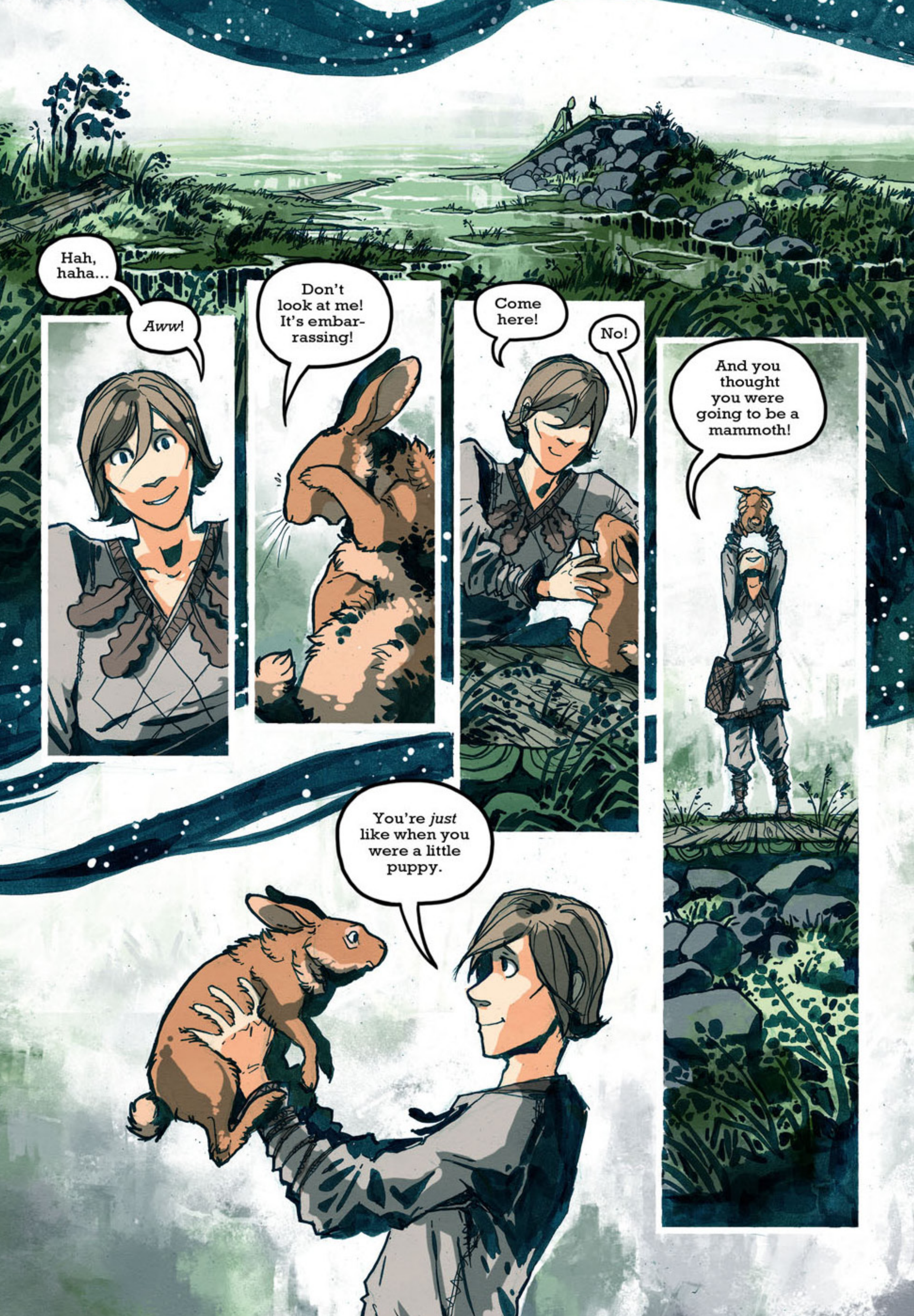

Thank you, Kokko.
We could never have fixed this without you.
Oh, no need to thank me. I'm always happy to help.
So, should we go?
Yes! I don't want to spend another minute here.
This place is the *worst!*
You're the worst.
WHAT?!
Nothing.
...like a darn sauna out here.

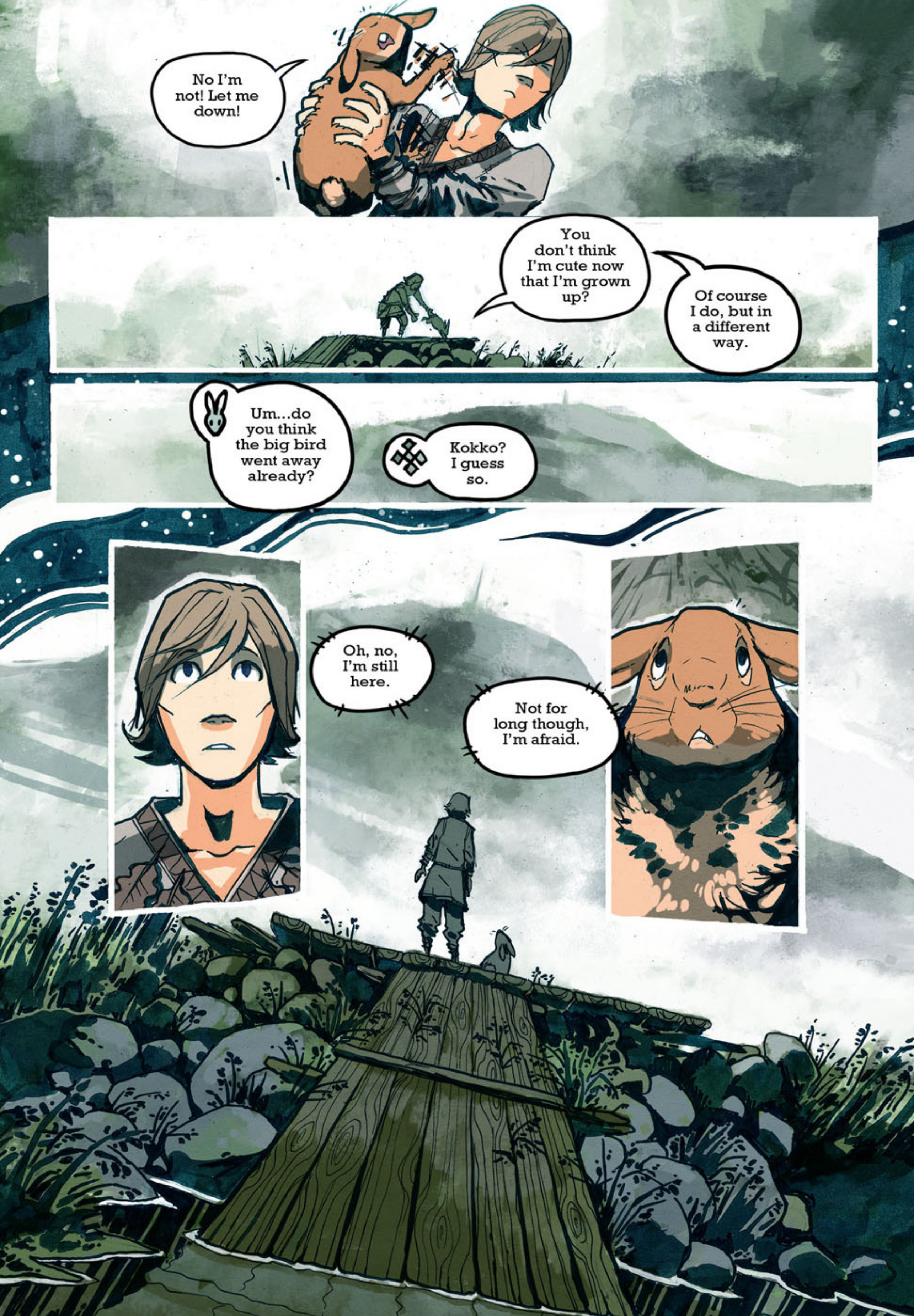

Heyyy!
You over there!
Put on the amulet already! I want to get out of here!
Hellooo!?
Can you hear what he's shouting about?
No, too echoey.
Do you think they can hear you?
No, too echoey.
I just want to get out of here!
They'll just have to take care of themselves.

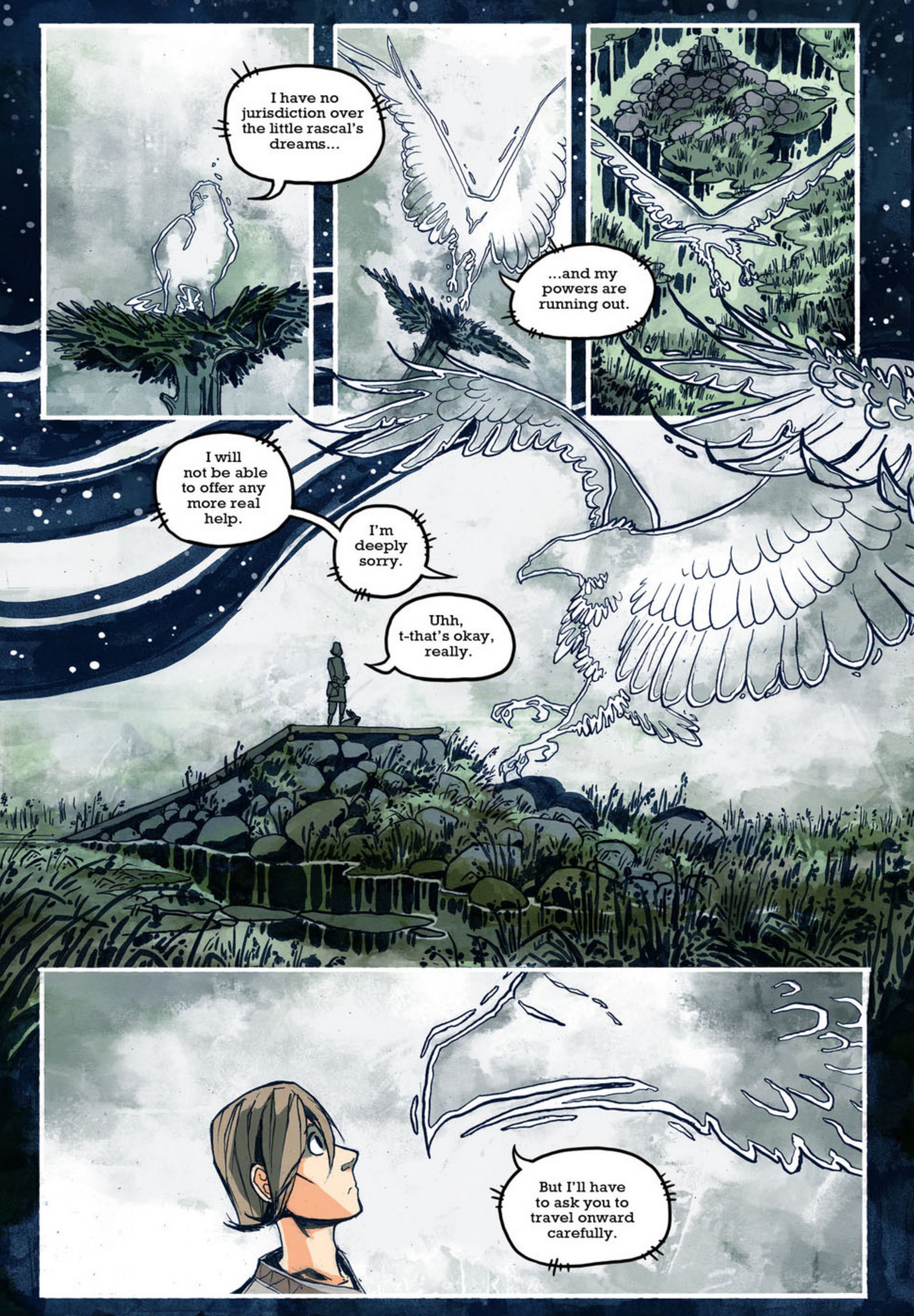

See you at the next grand conference?
Definitely!

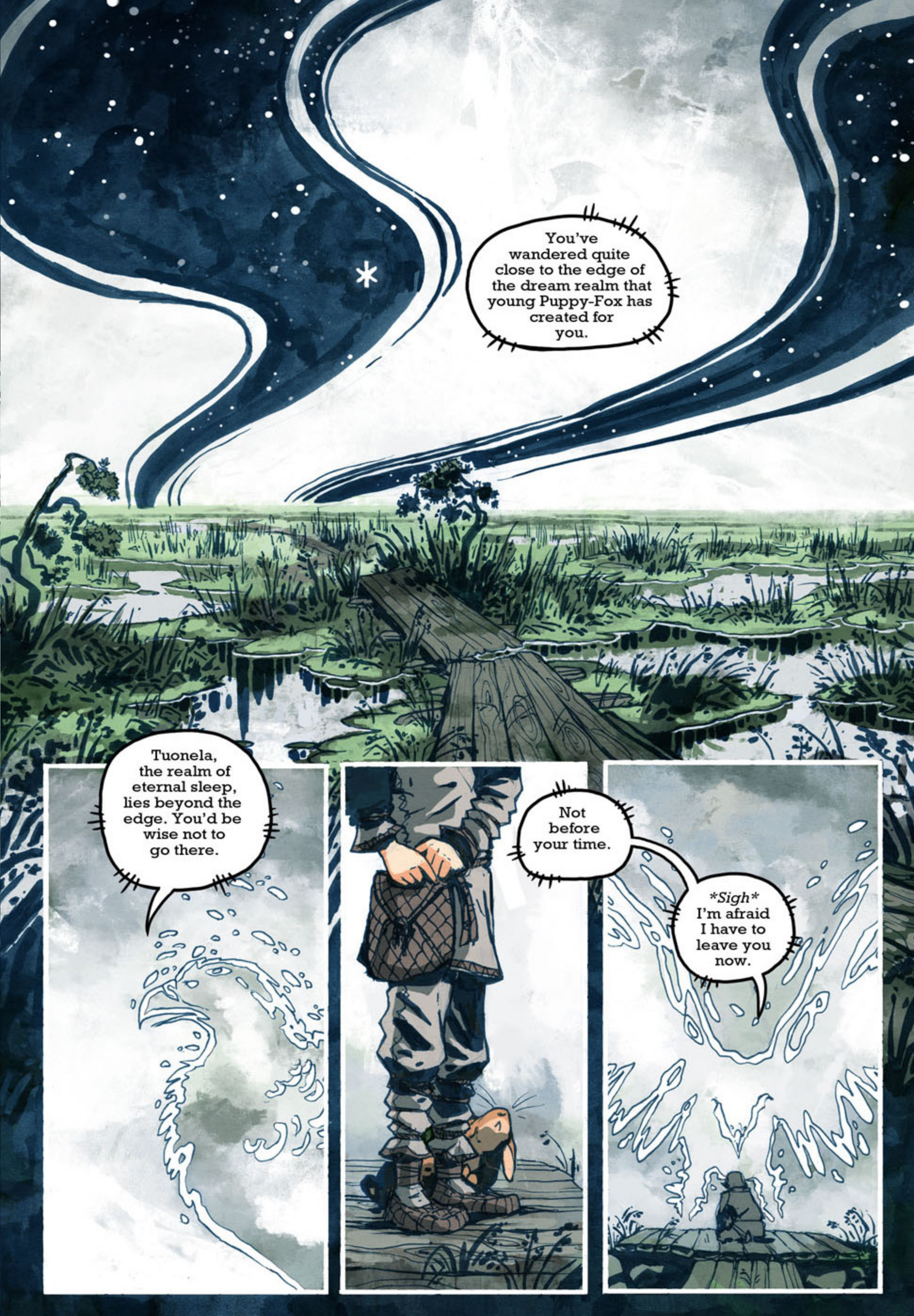

Damn back pain...
Ville, how are you doing?
I-uh, um...
What?

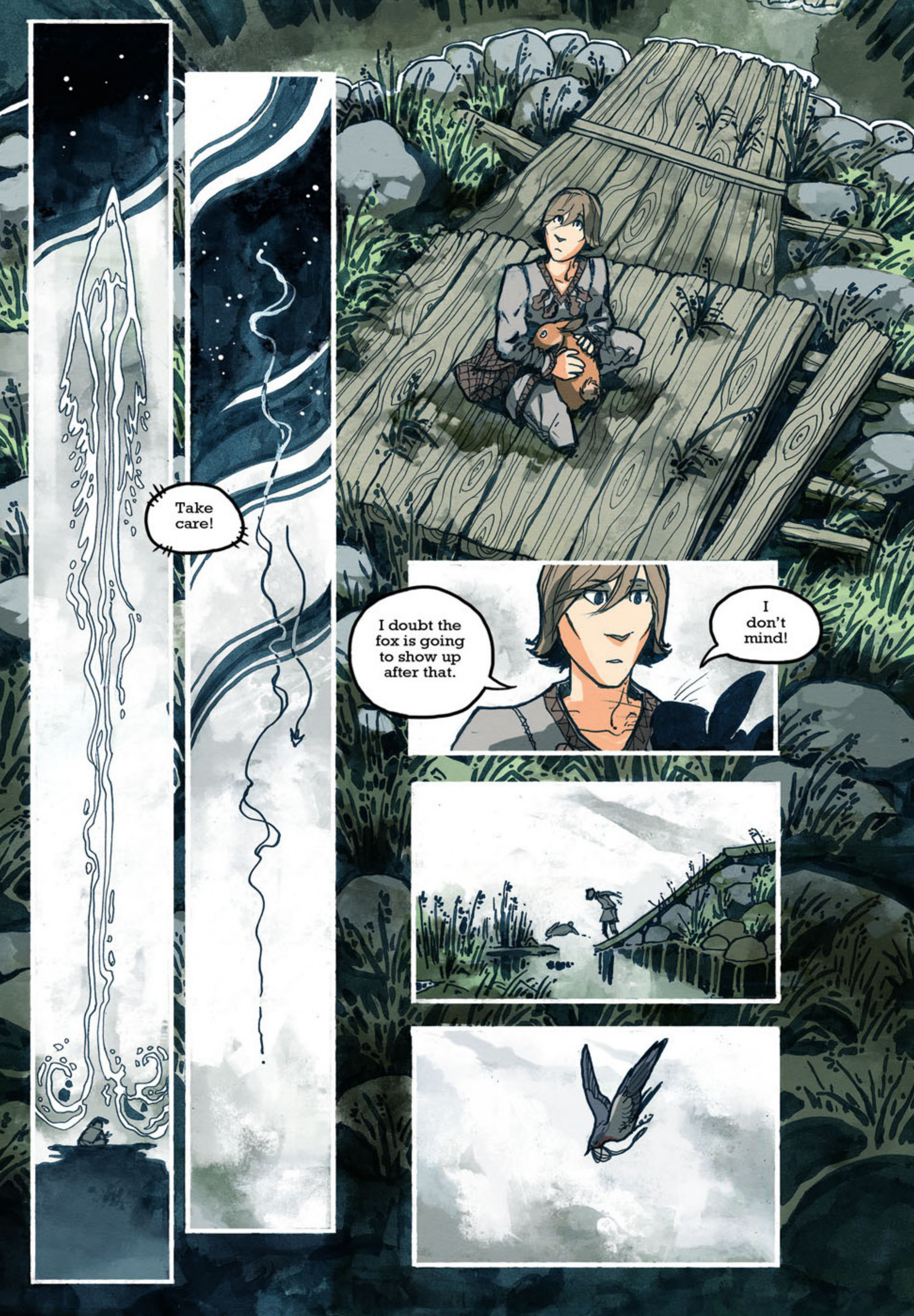
A Redtail's Dream
卌

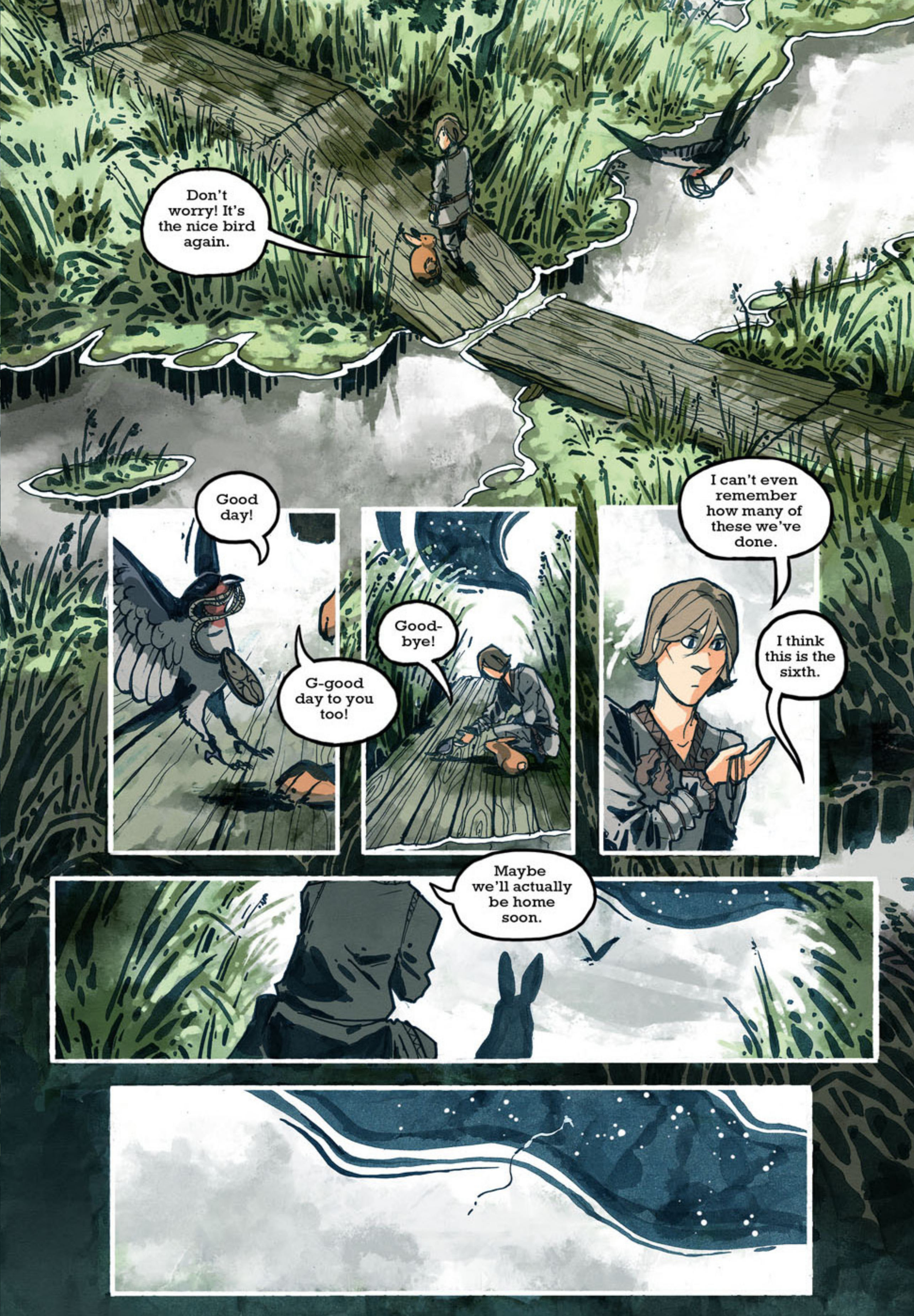

Hah, haha…
Aww!
Don't look at me! It's embarrassing!
Come here!
No!
And you thought you were going to be a mammoth!
You're *just* like when you were a little puppy.

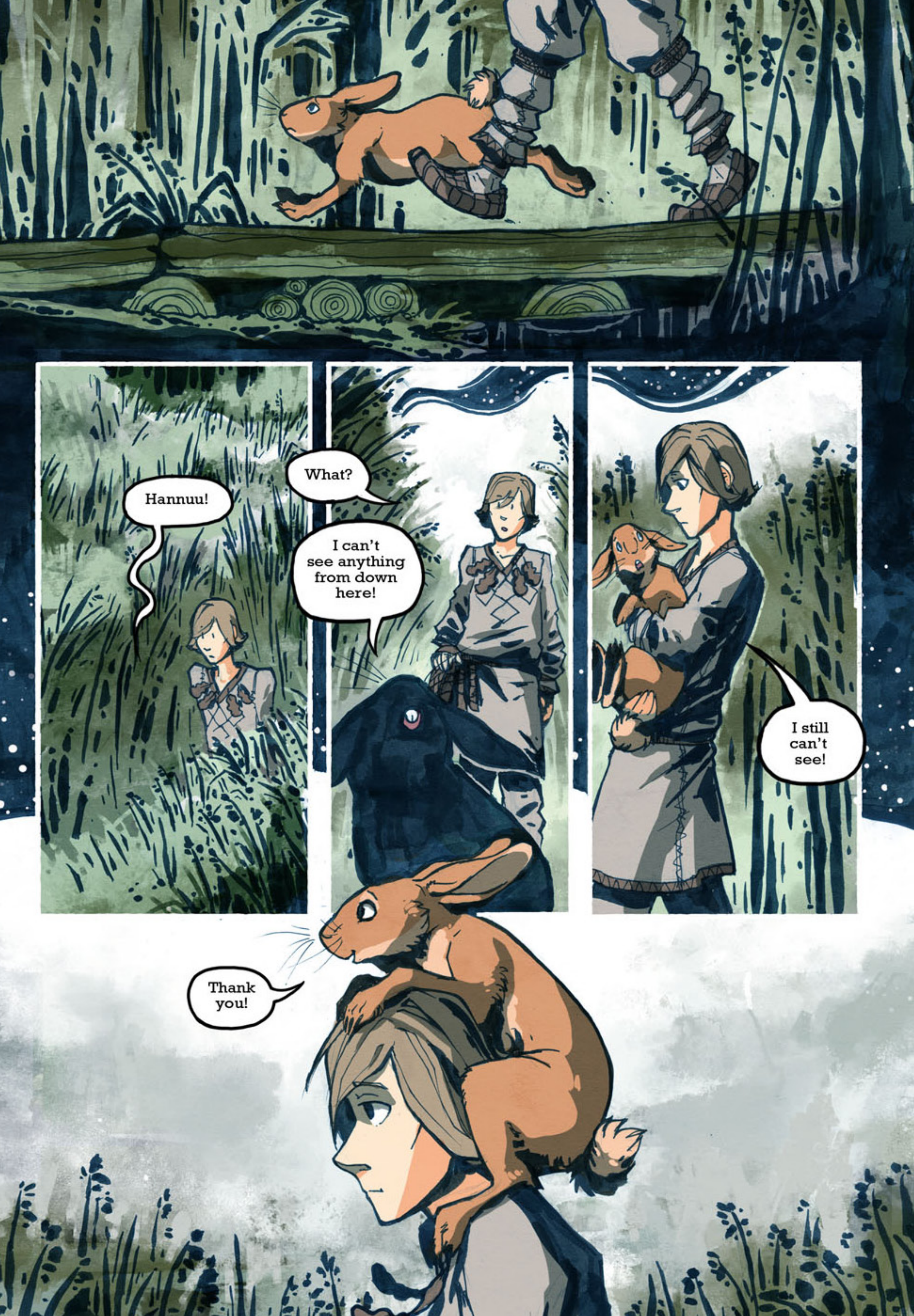

No I'm not! Let me down!
You don't think I'm cute now that I'm grown up?
Of course I do, but in a different way.
Um...do you think the big bird went away already?
Kokko? I guess so.
Oh, no, I'm still here.
Not for long though, I'm afraid.

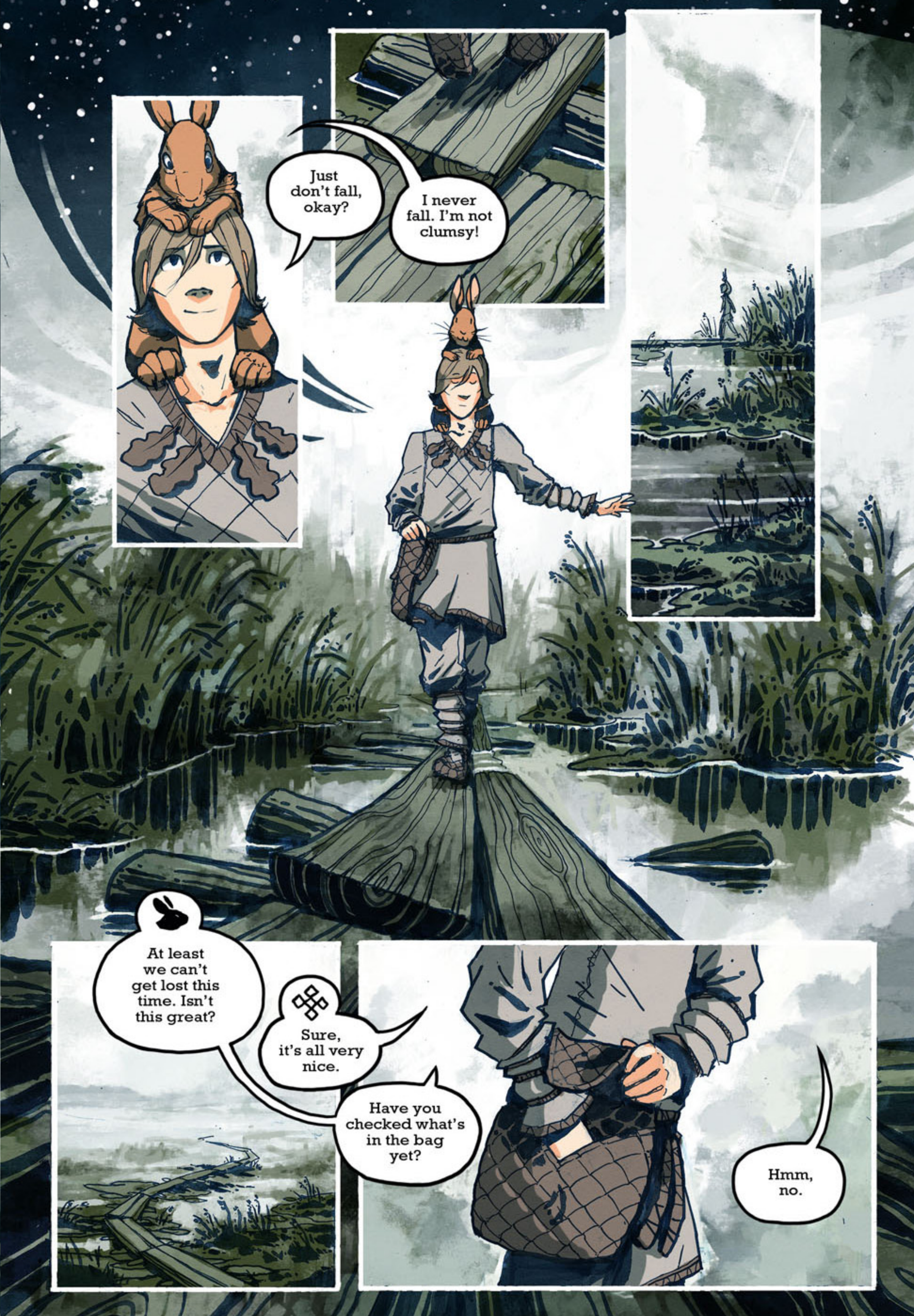

I have no jurisdiction over the little rascal's dreams...
...and my powers are running out.
I will not be able to offer any more real help.
I'm deeply sorry.
Uhh, t-that's okay, really.
But I'll have to ask you to travel onward carefully.

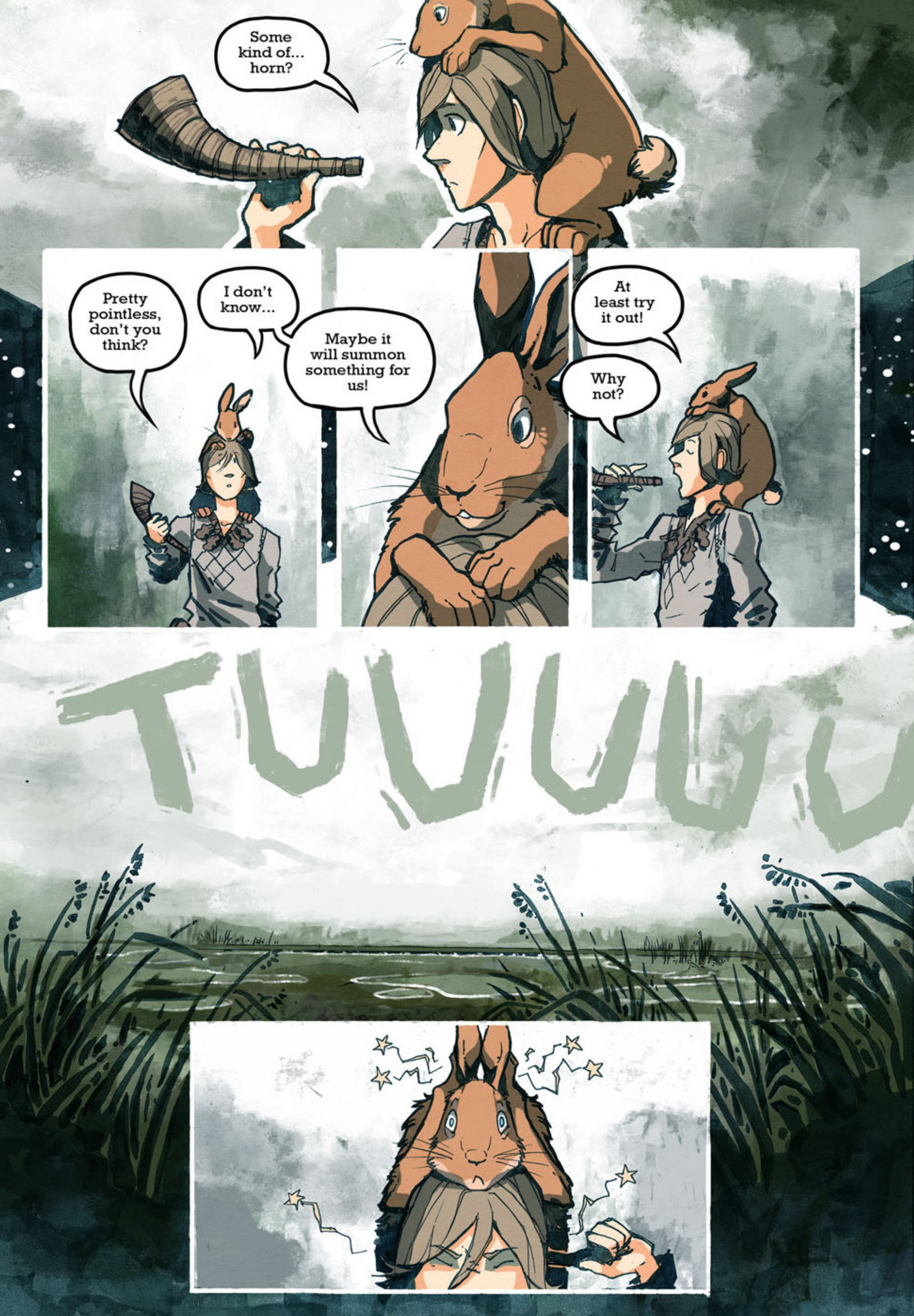

You've wandered quite close to the edge of the dream realm that young Puppy-Fox has created for you.
Tuonela, the realm of eternal sleep, lies beyond the edge. You'd be wise not to go there.
Not before your time.
Sigh I'm afraid I have to leave you now.

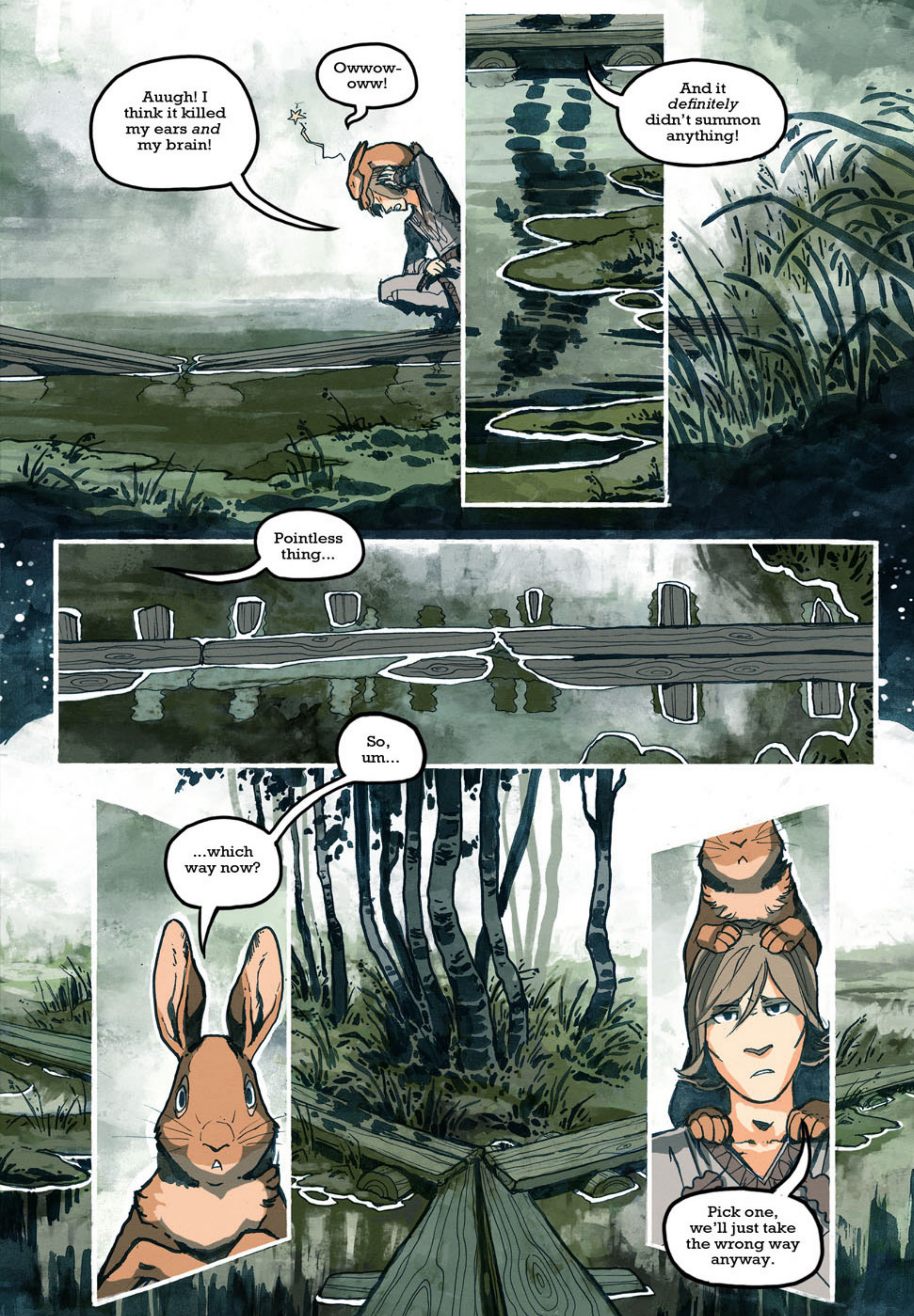

Take care!
I doubt the fox is going to show up after that.
I don't mind!

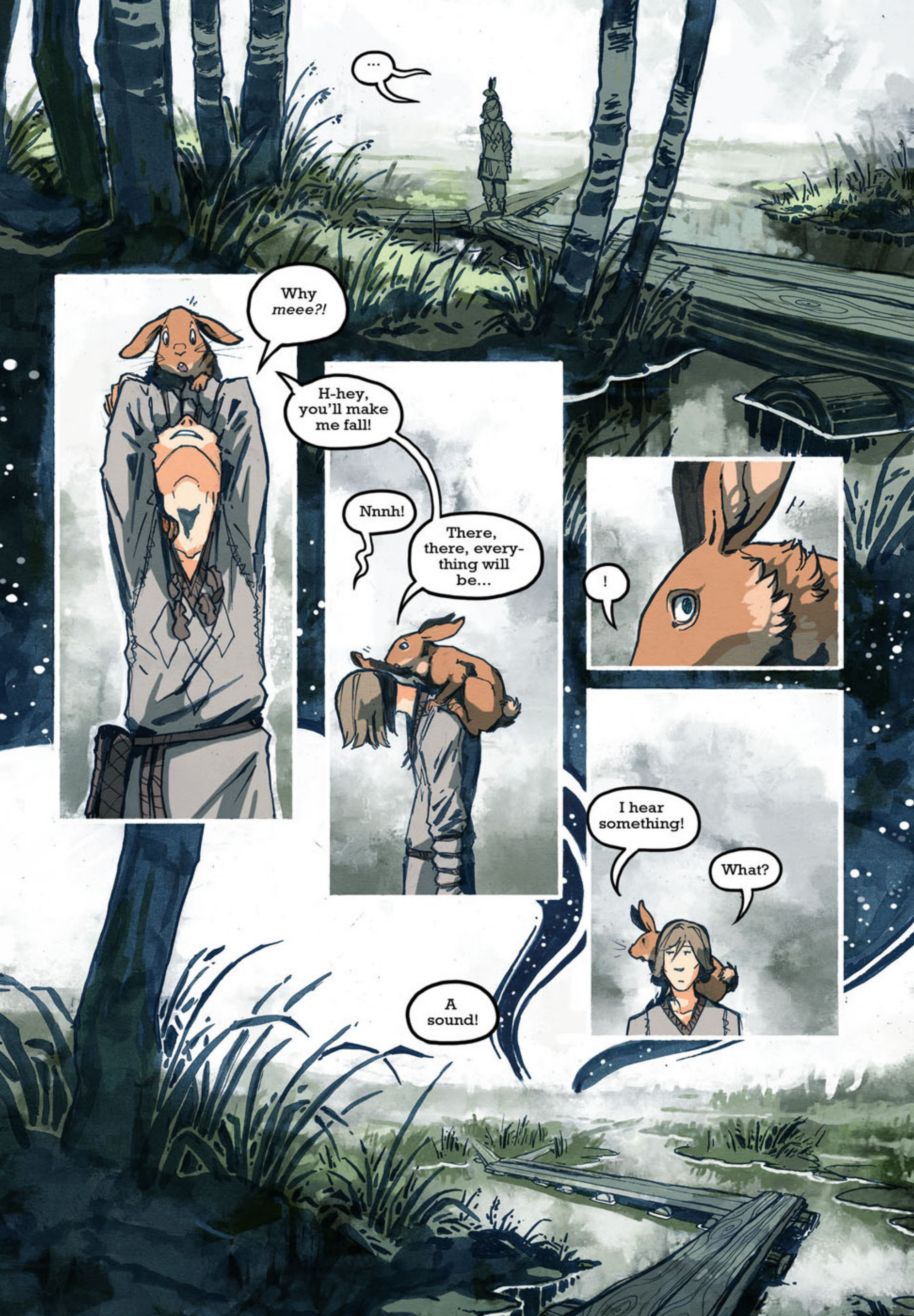

Don't worry! It's the nice bird again.
Good day!
G-good day to you too!
Good-bye!
I can't even remember how many of these we've done.
I think this is the sixth.
Maybe we'll actually be home soon.

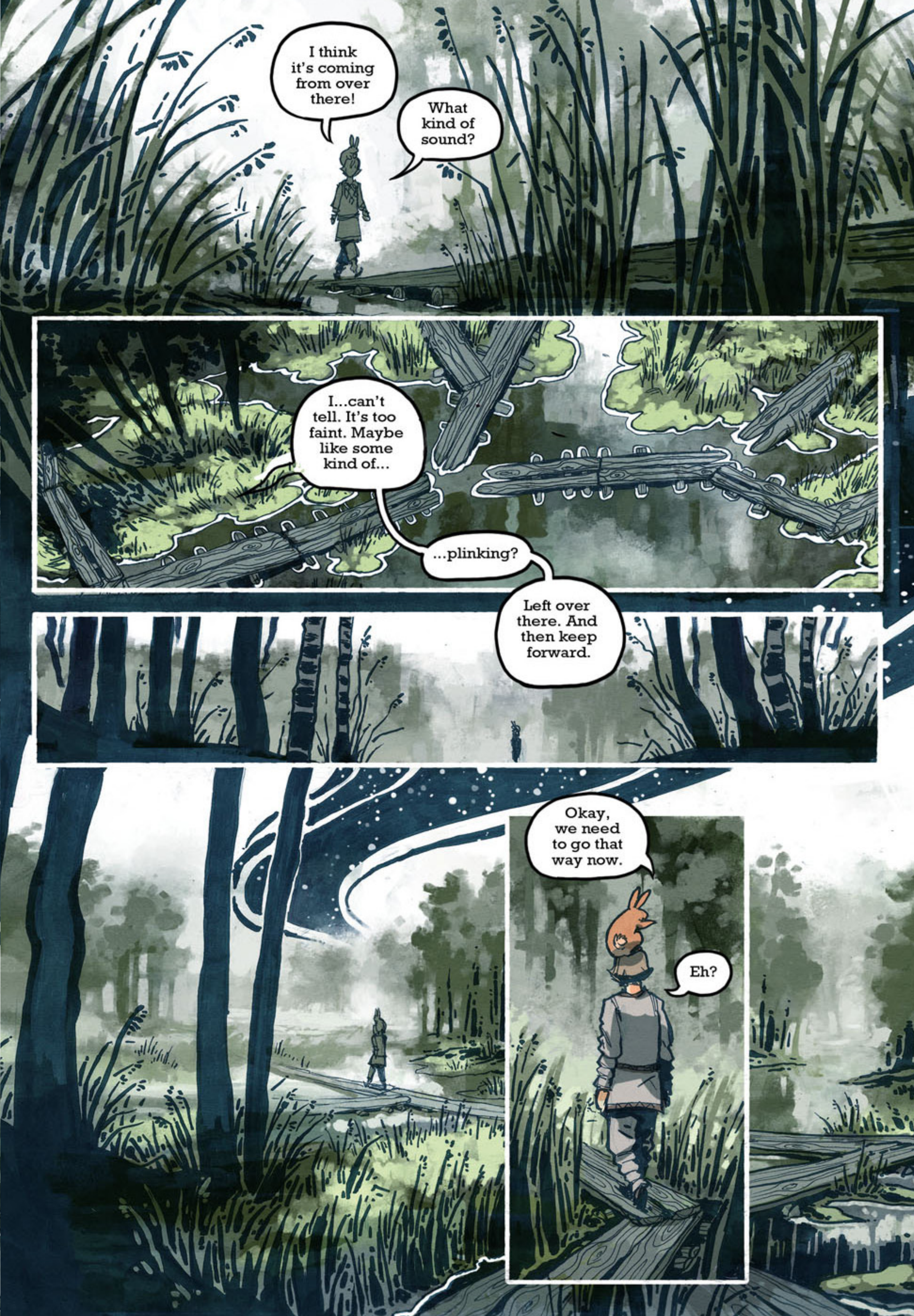

Hannuu!
What?
I can't see anything from down here!
I still can't see!
Thank you!

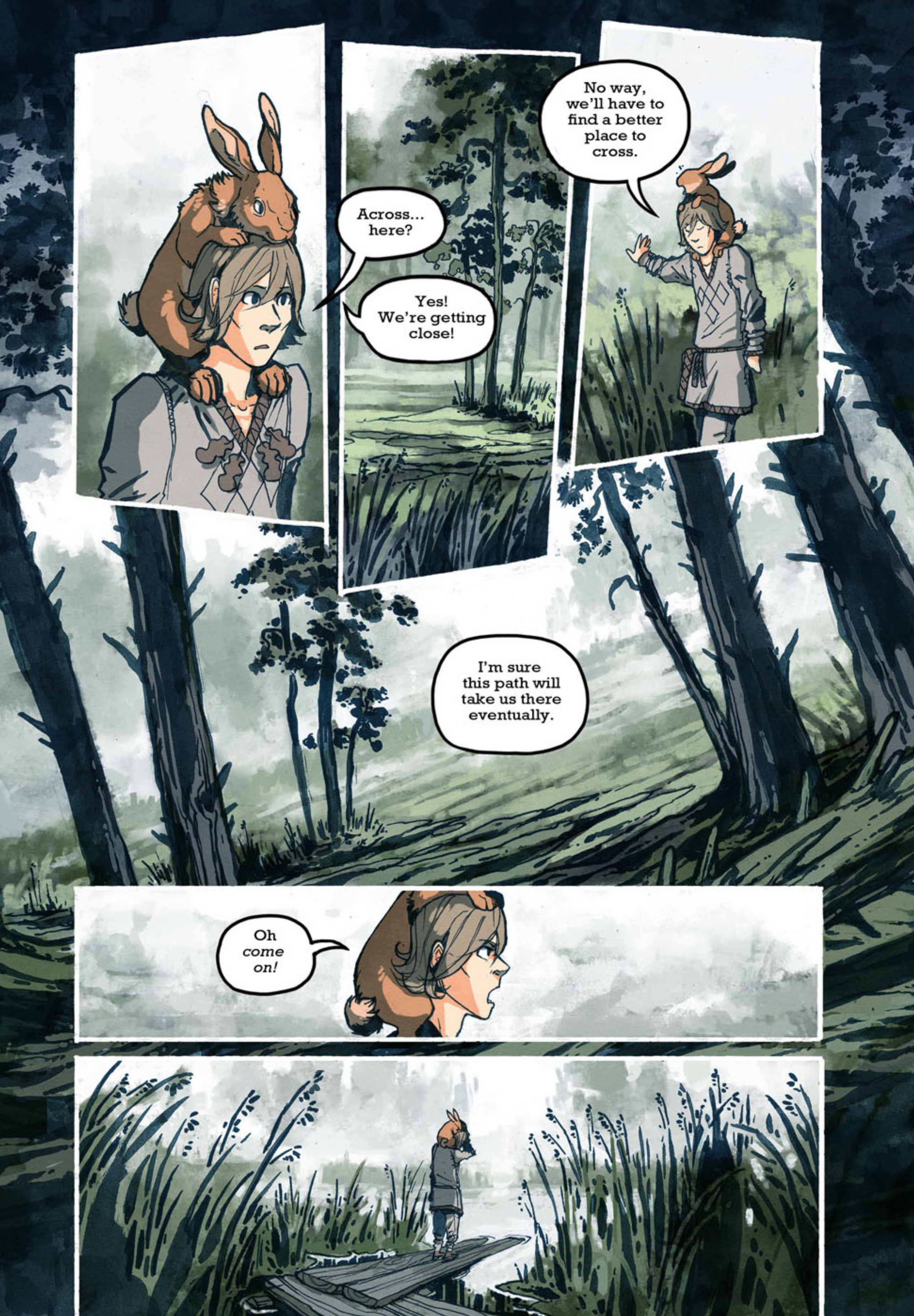

Just don't fall, okay?
I never fall. I'm not clumsy!
At least we can't get lost this time. Isn't this great?
Sure, it's all very nice.
Have you checked what's in the bag yet?
Hmm, no.

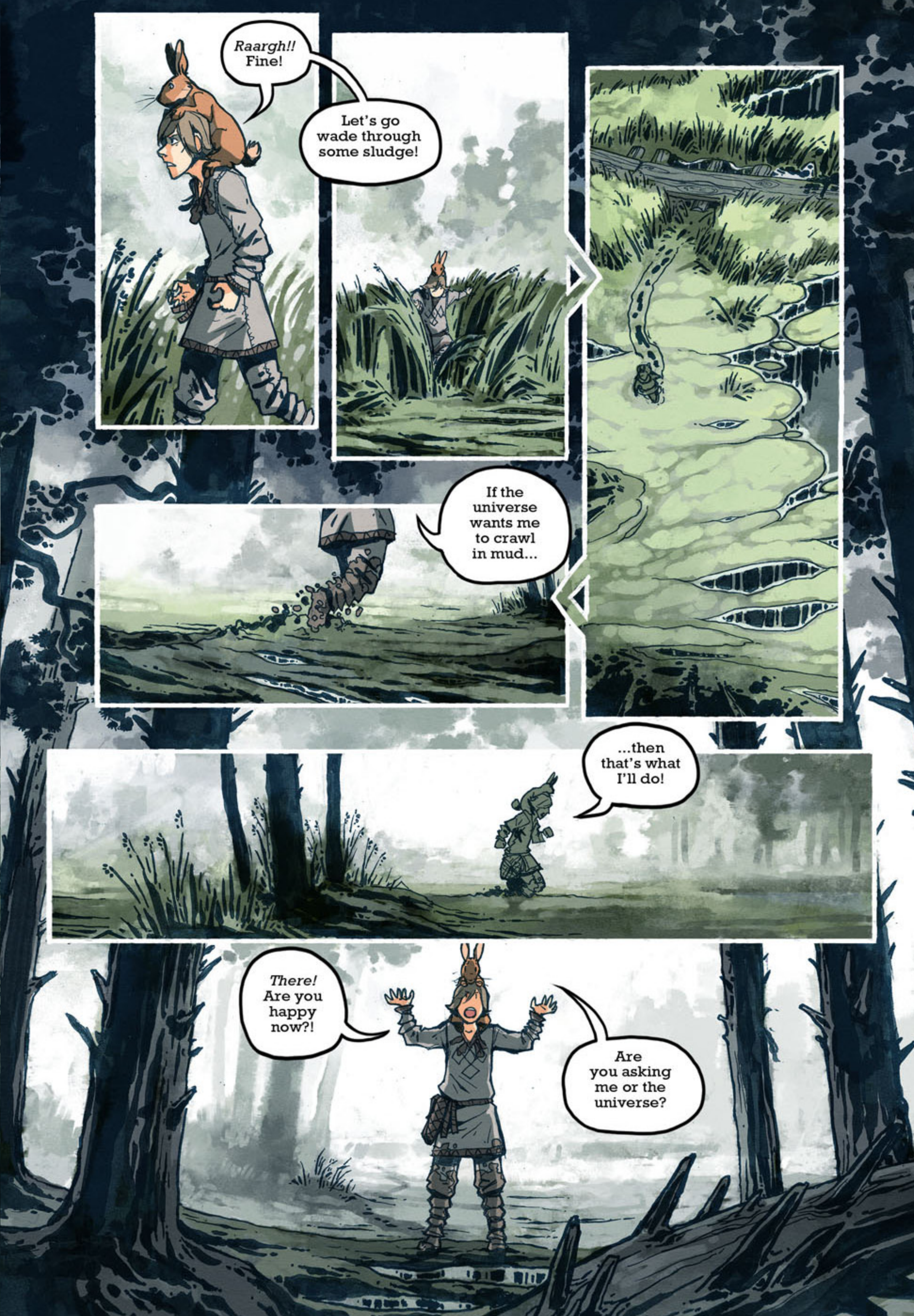

Some kind of… horn?
Pretty pointless, don't you think?
I don't know…
Maybe it will summon something for us!
At least try it out!
Why not?
TUUUU

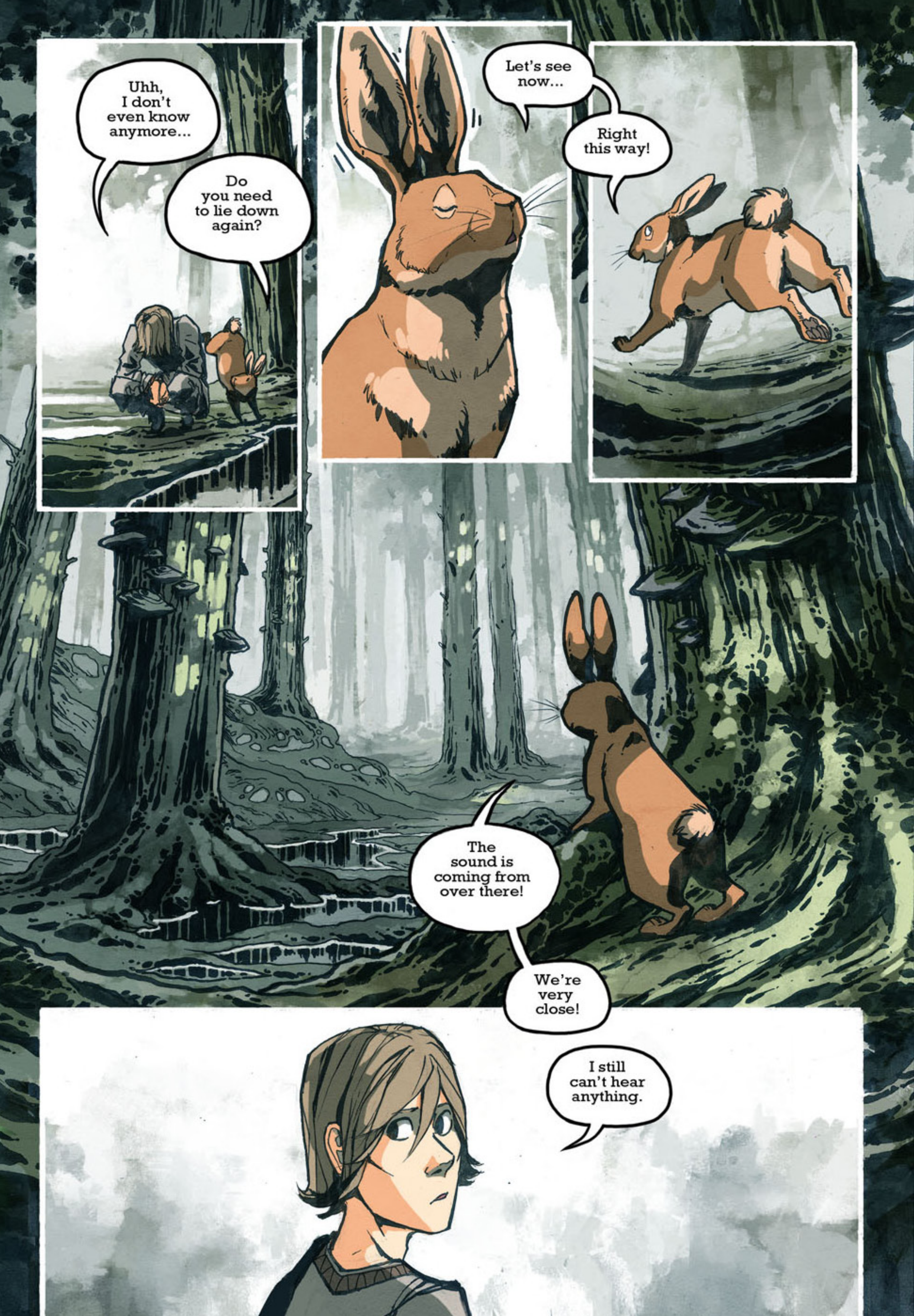

Auugh! I think it killed my ears *and* my brain!
Owwow-oww!
And it *definitely* didn't summon anything!
Pointless thing...
So, um...
...which way now?
Pick one, we'll just take the wrong way anyway.

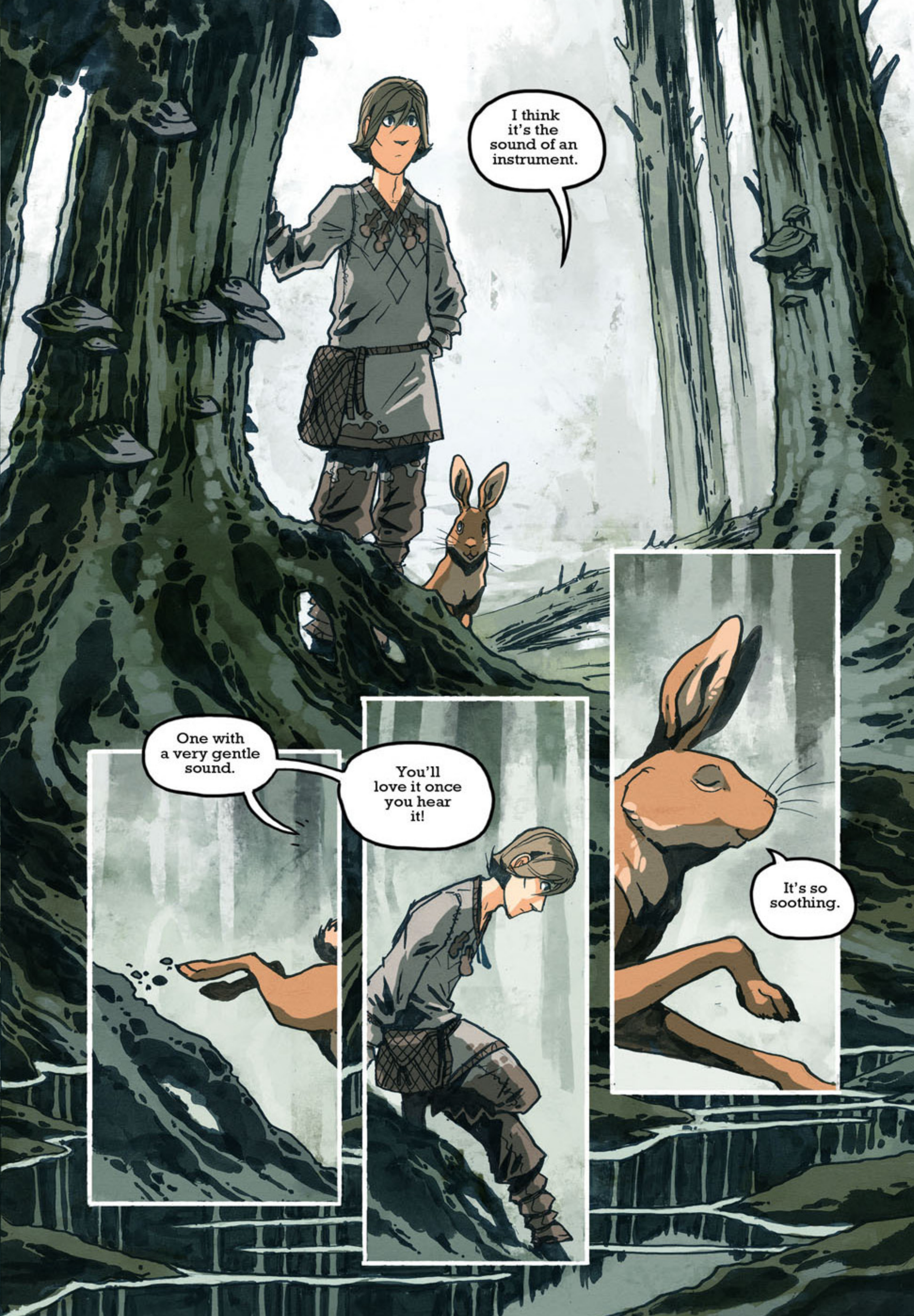

...
Why *meee?!*
H-hey, you'll make me fall!
Nnnh!
There, there, everything will be...
!
I hear something!
What?
A sound!

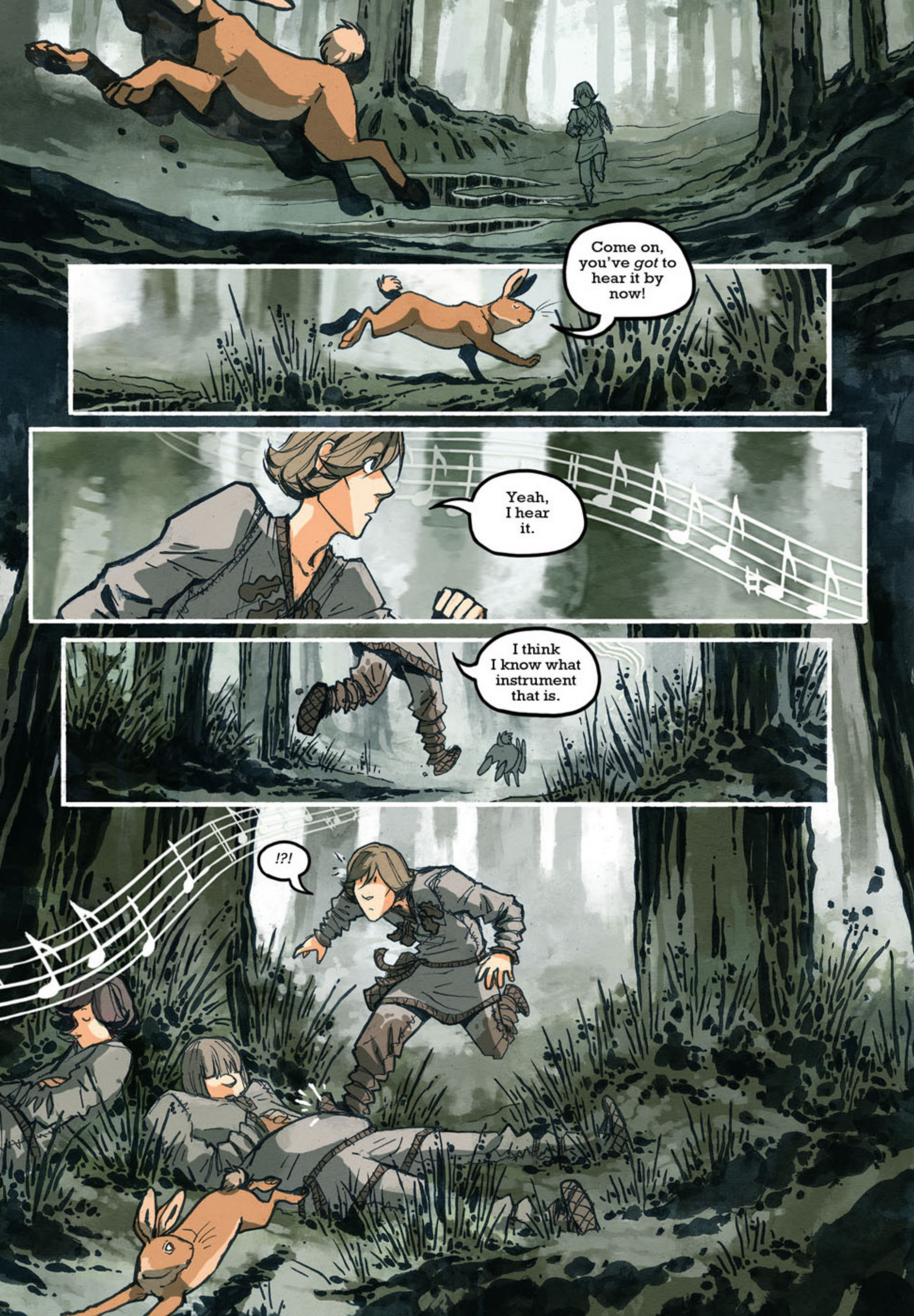

I think it's coming from over there!
What kind of sound?
I...can't tell. It's too faint. Maybe like some kind of...
...plinking?
Left over there. And then keep forward.
Okay, we need to go that way now.
Eh?

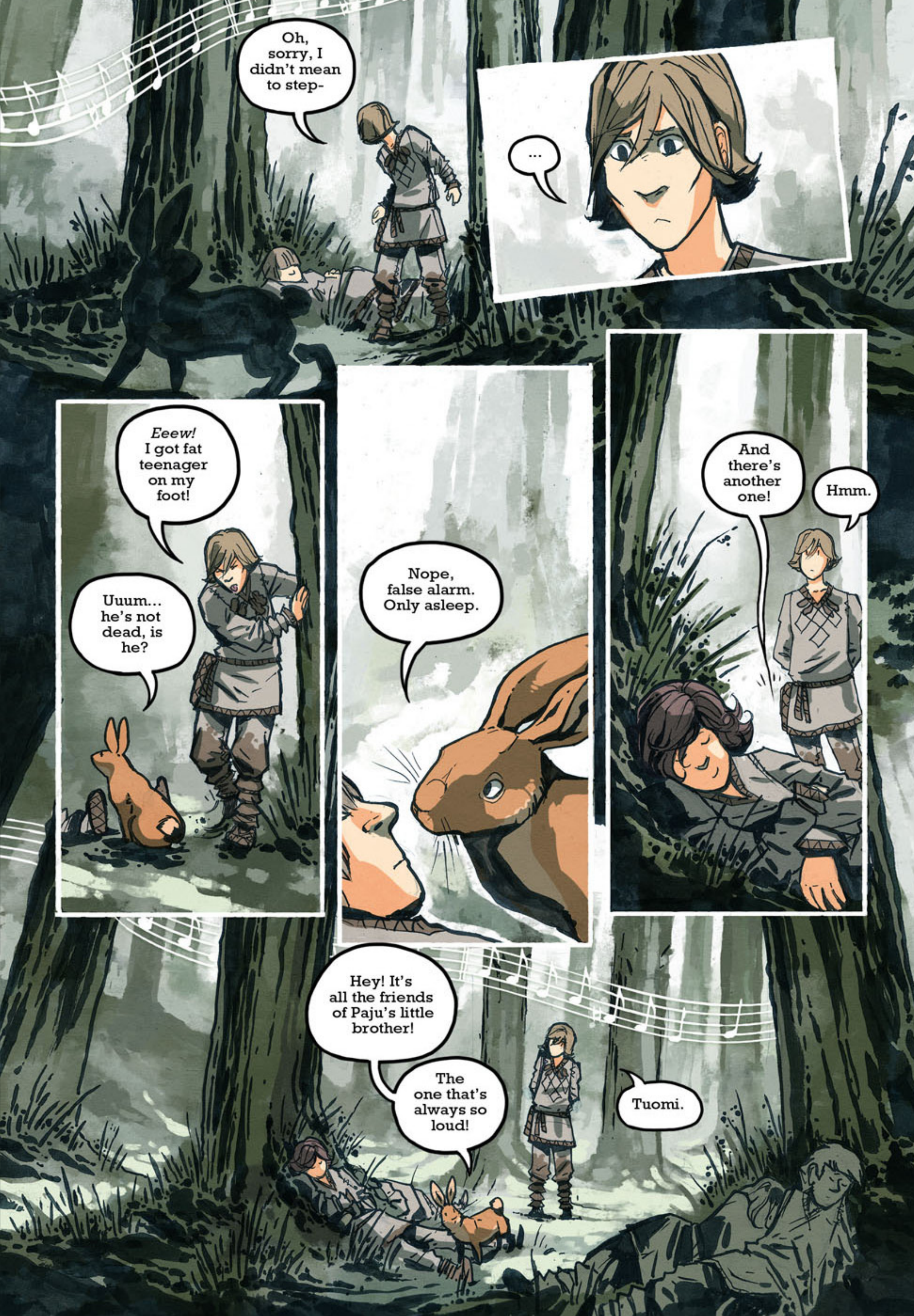

Across... here?
Yes! We're getting close!
No way, we'll have to find a better place to cross.
I'm sure this path will take us there eventually.
Oh *come on!*

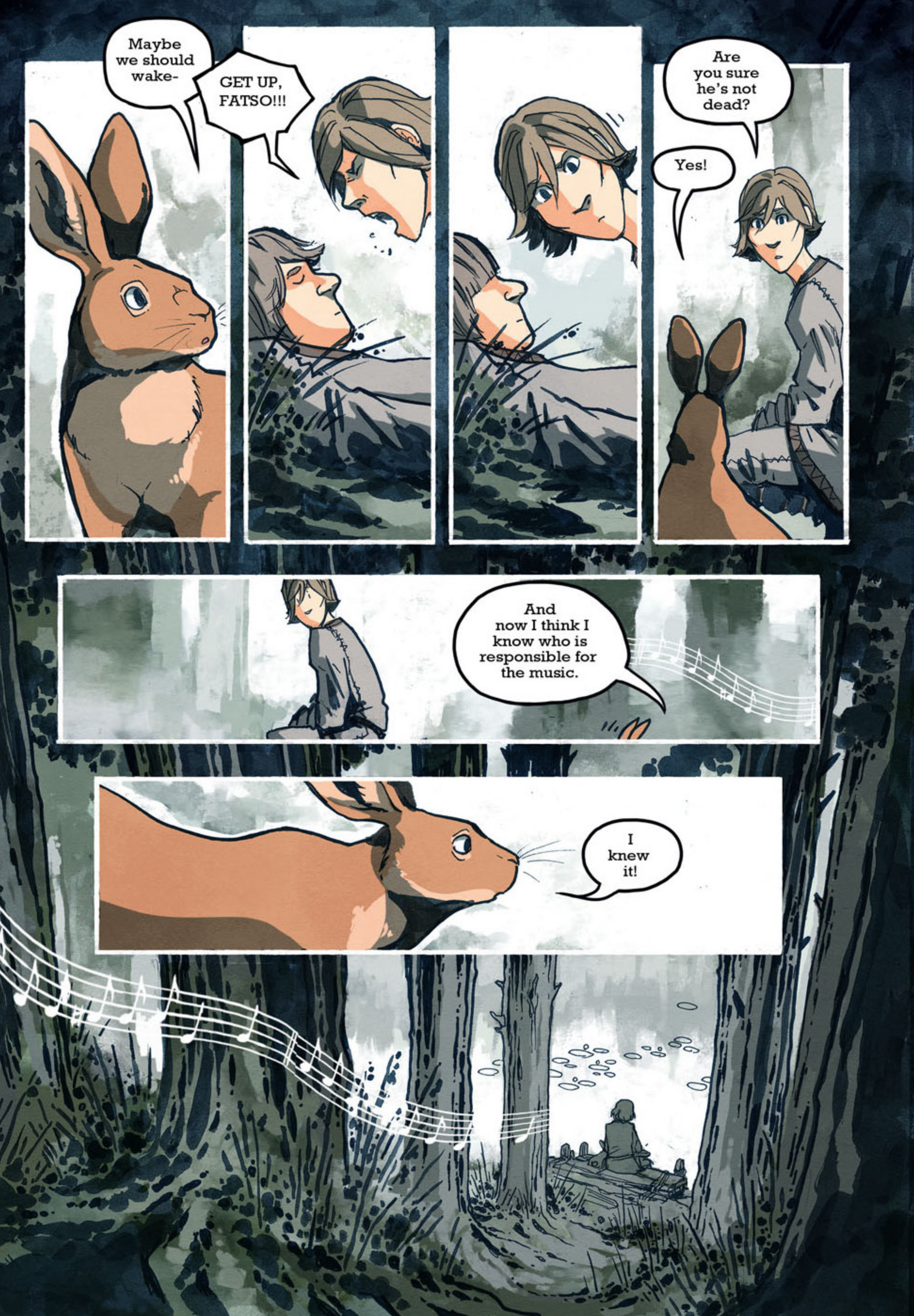

Raargh!! Fine!
Let's go wade through some sludge!
If the universe wants me to crawl in mud...
...then that's what I'll do!
There! Are you happy now?!
Are you asking me or the universe?

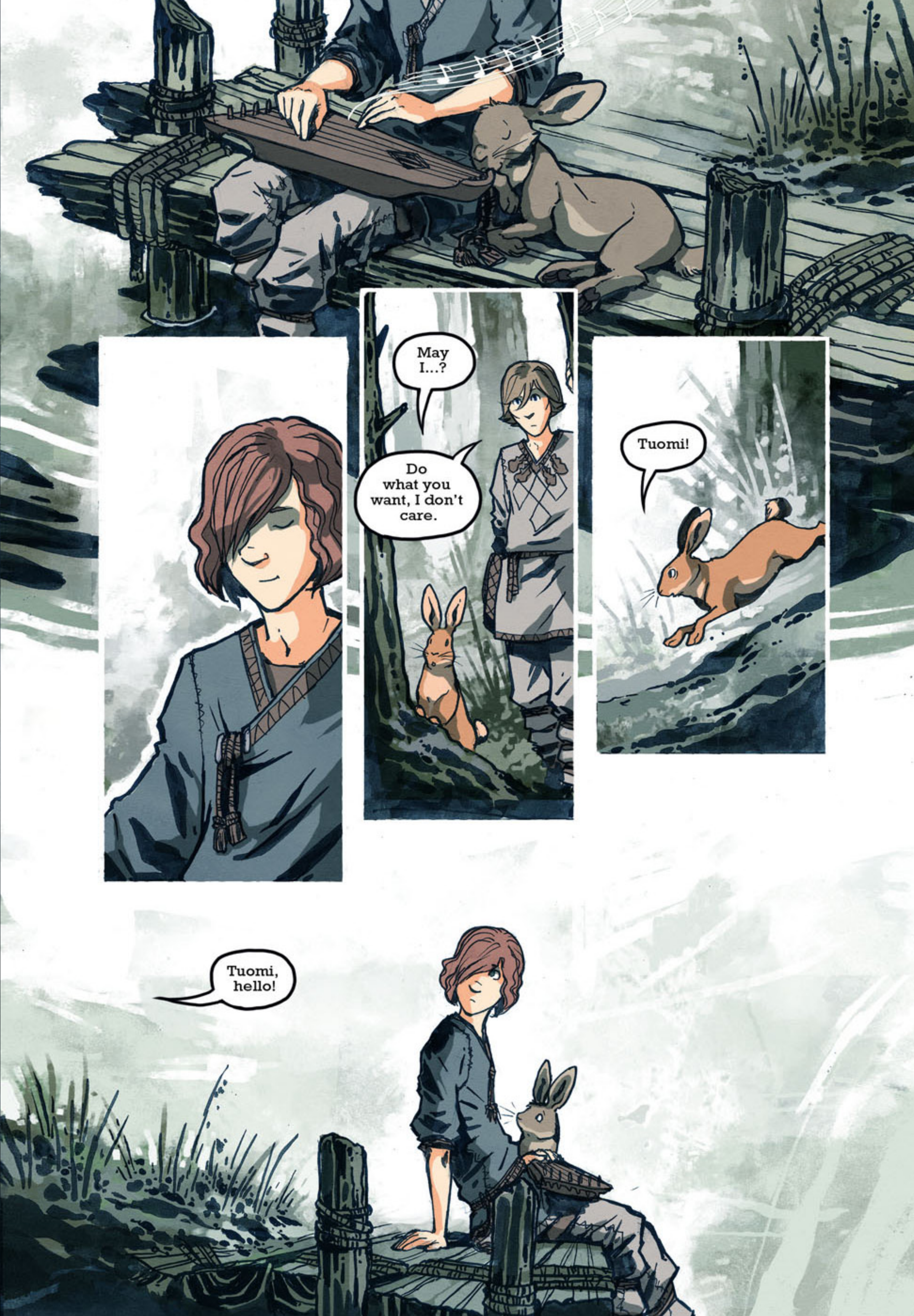

Uhh, I don't even know anymore...
Do you need to lie down again?
Let's see now...
Right this way!
The sound is coming from over there!
We're very close!
I still can't hear anything.

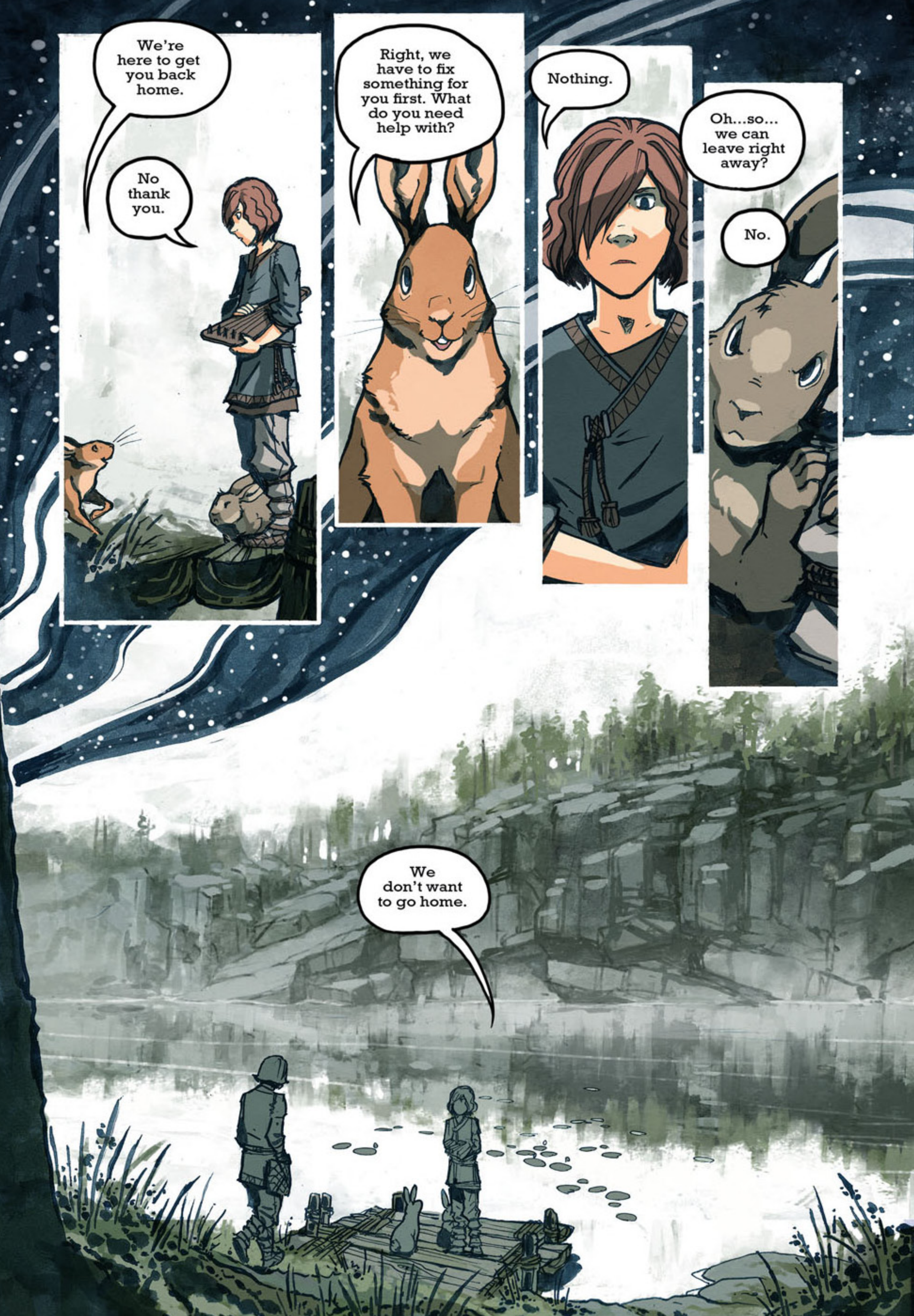

I think it's the sound of an instrument.
One with a very gentle sound.
You'll love it once you hear it!
It's so soothing.

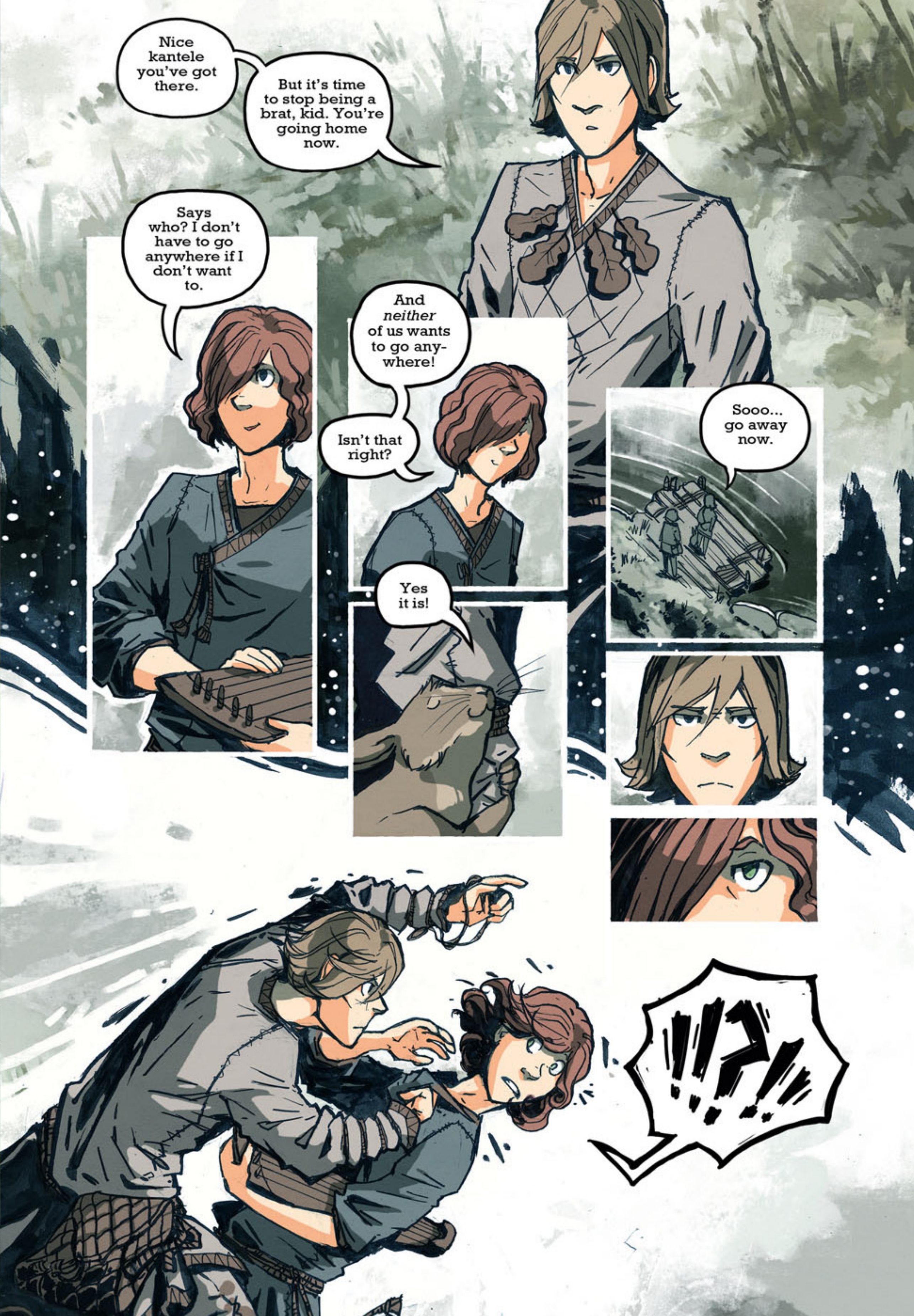

Come on, you've *got* to hear it by now!
Yeah, I hear it.
I think I know what instrument that is.
!?!

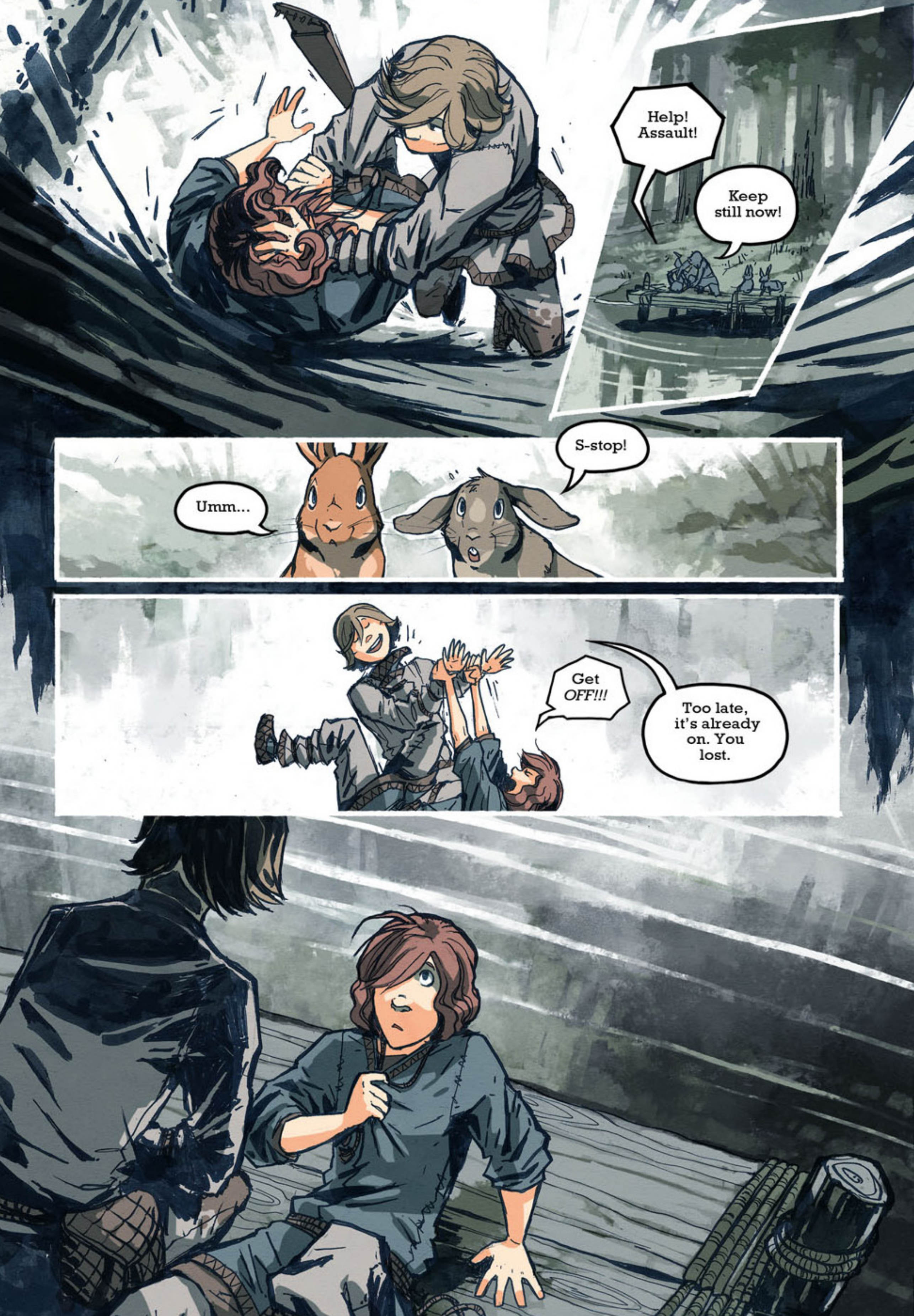

Oh, sorry, I didn't mean to step-
...
Eeew! I got fat teenager on my foot!
Uuum... he's not dead, is he?
Nope, false alarm. Only asleep.
And there's another one!
Hmm.
Hey! It's all the friends of Paju's little brother!
The one that's always so loud!
Tuomi.

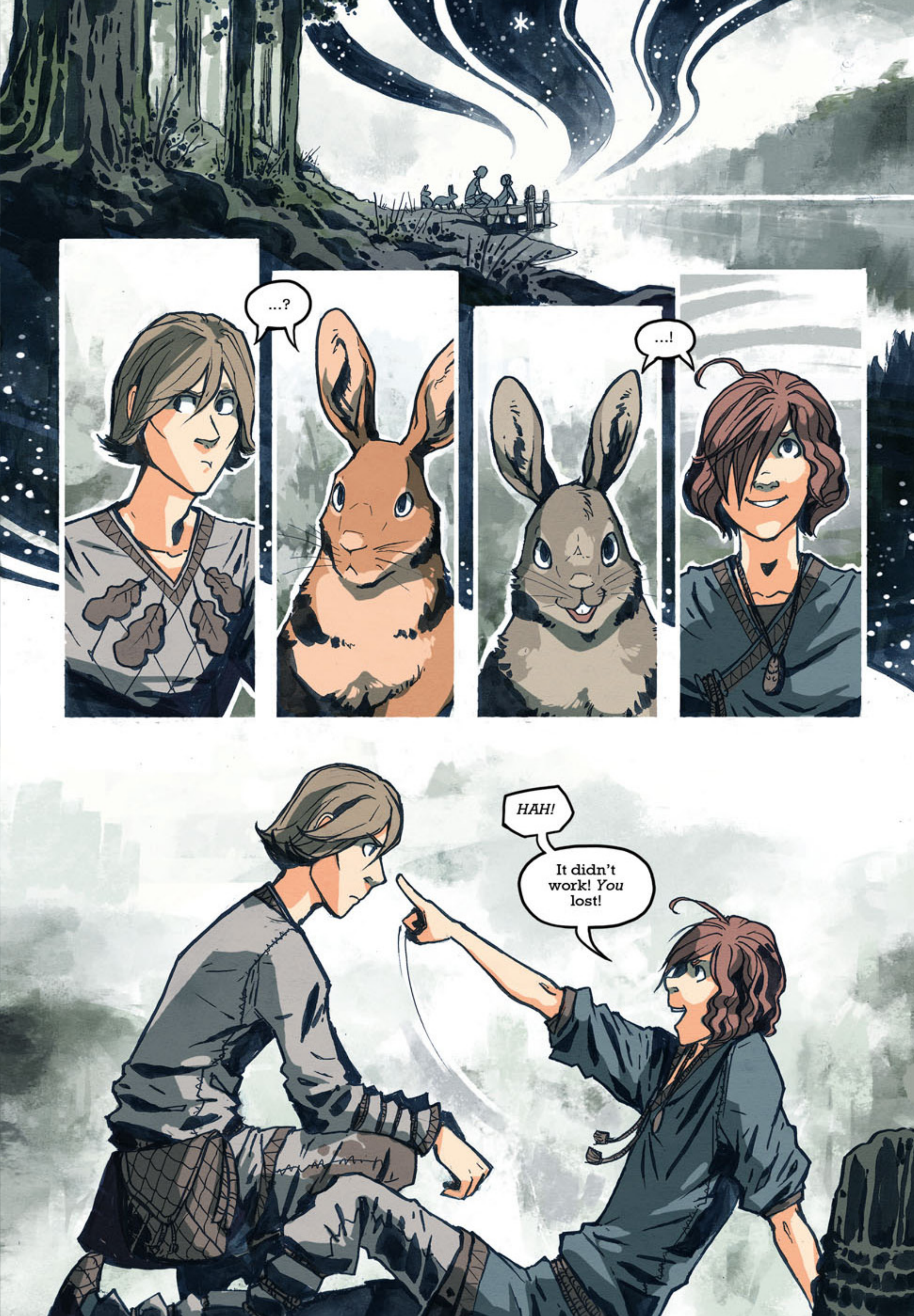

Maybe we should wake-
GET UP, FATSO!!!
Are you sure he's not dead?
Yes!
And now I think I know who is responsible for the music.
I knew it!

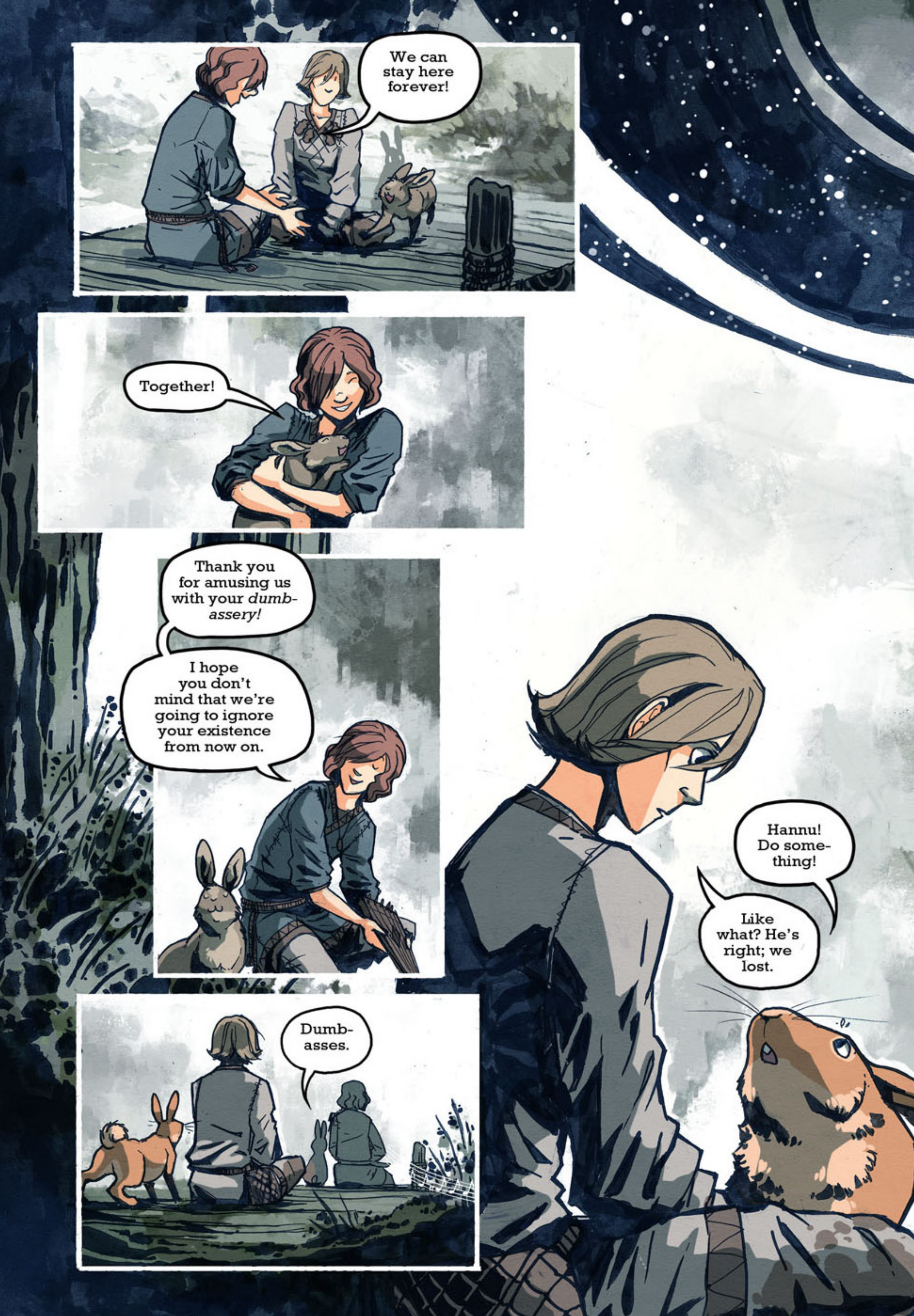

May I...?
Do what you want, I don't care.
Tuomi!
Tuomi, hello!

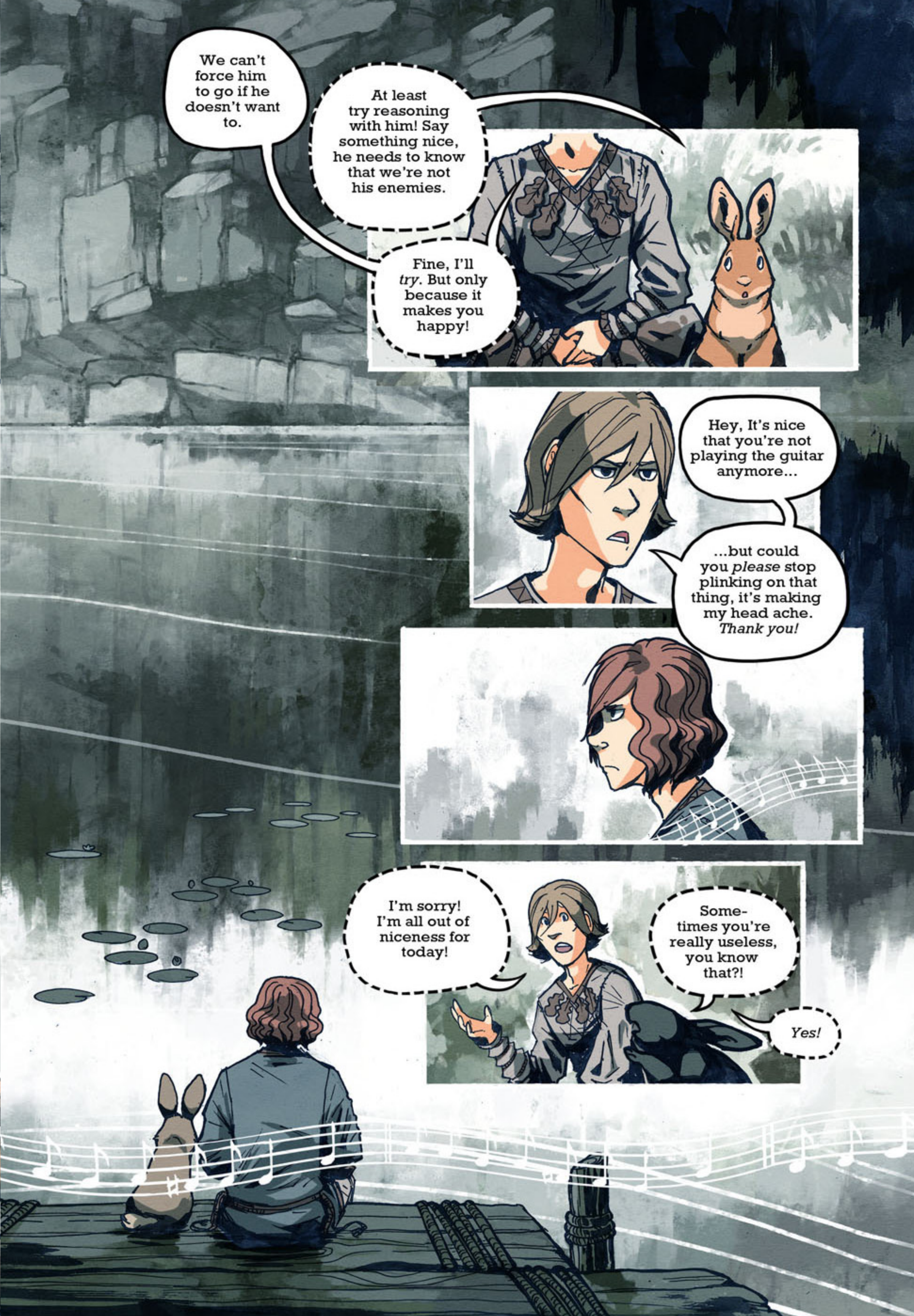

We're here to get you back home.
No thank you.
Right, we have to fix something for you first. What do you need help with?
Nothing.
Oh...so... we can leave right away?
No.
We don't want to go home.

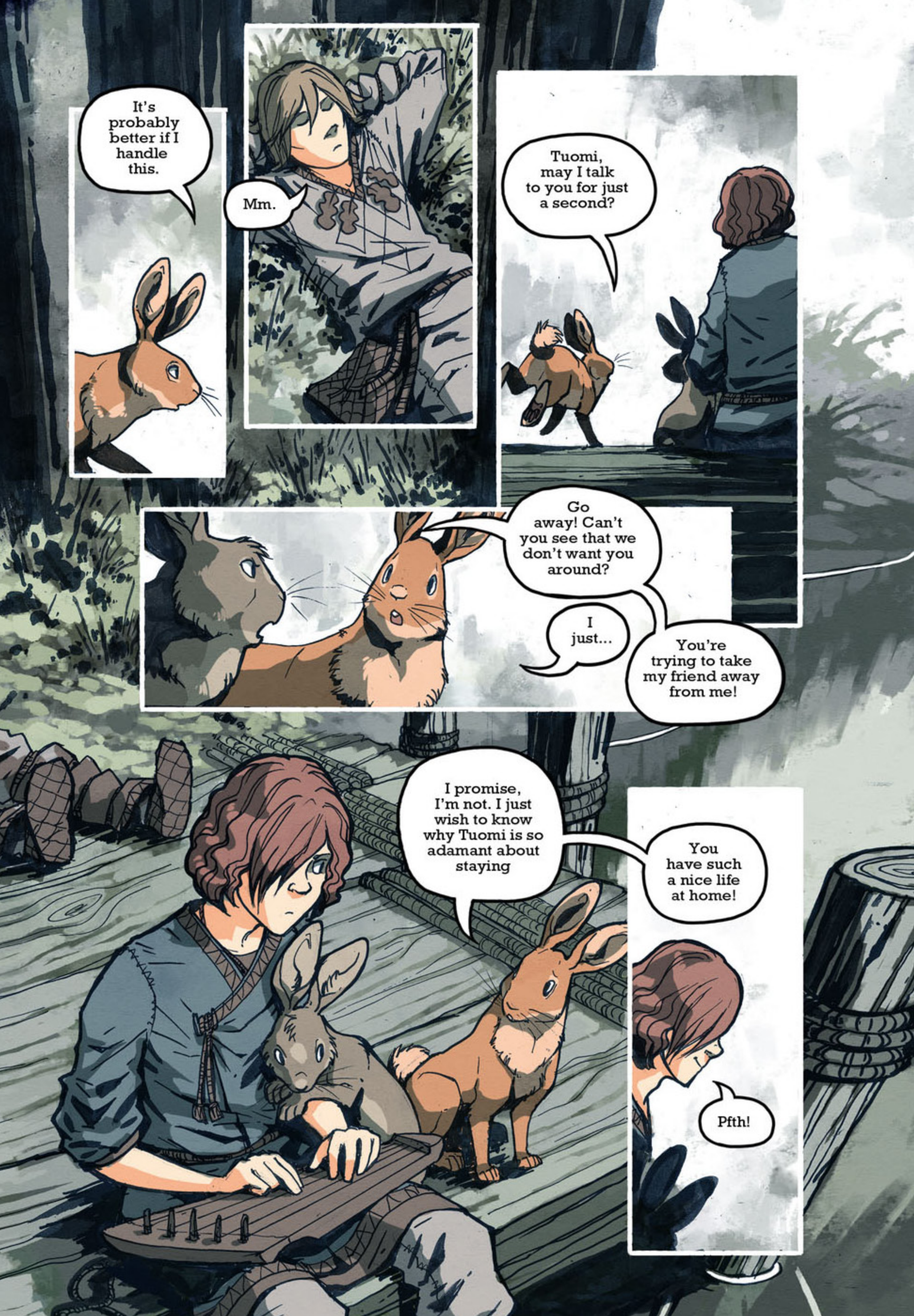

Nice kantele you've got there.
But it's time to stop being a brat, kid. You're going home now.
Says who? I don't have to go anywhere if I don't want to.
And *neither* of us wants to go anywhere!
Isn't that right?
Yes it is!
Sooo... go away now.
!!?!!

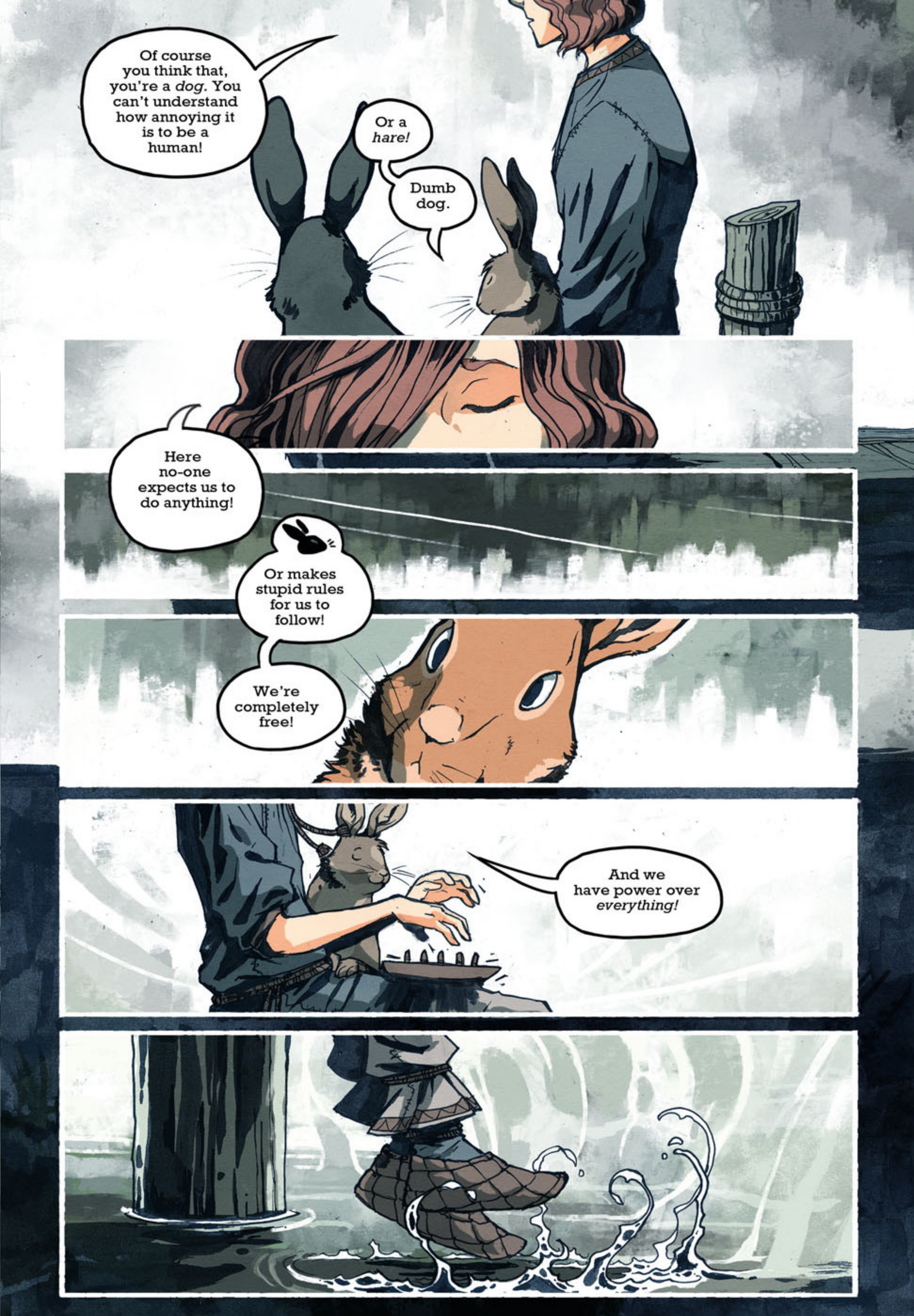

Help! Assault!
Keep still now!
Umm...
S-stop!
Get *OFF!!!*
Too late, it's already on. You lost.

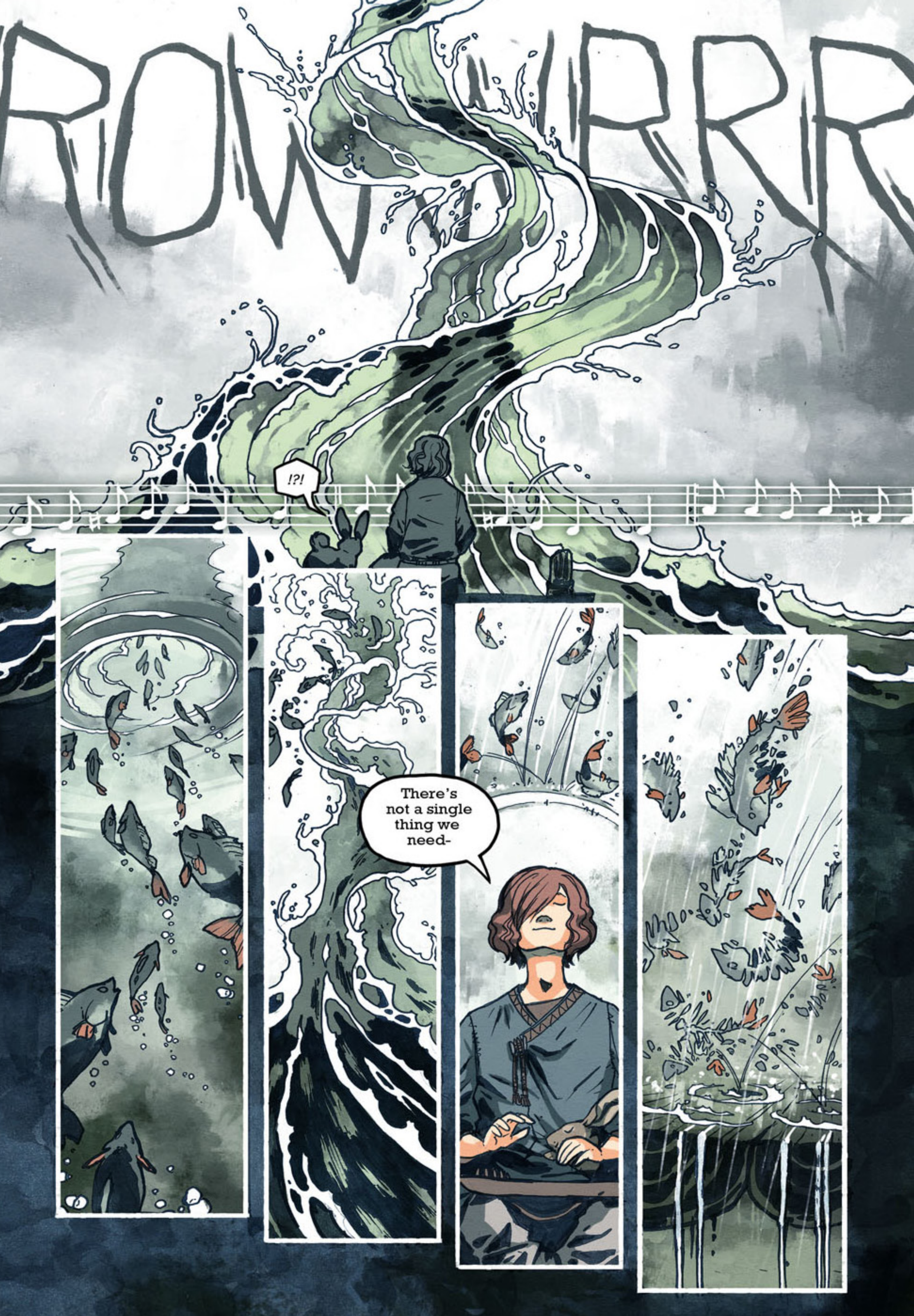

...?
...!
HAH!
It didn't work! *You* lost!

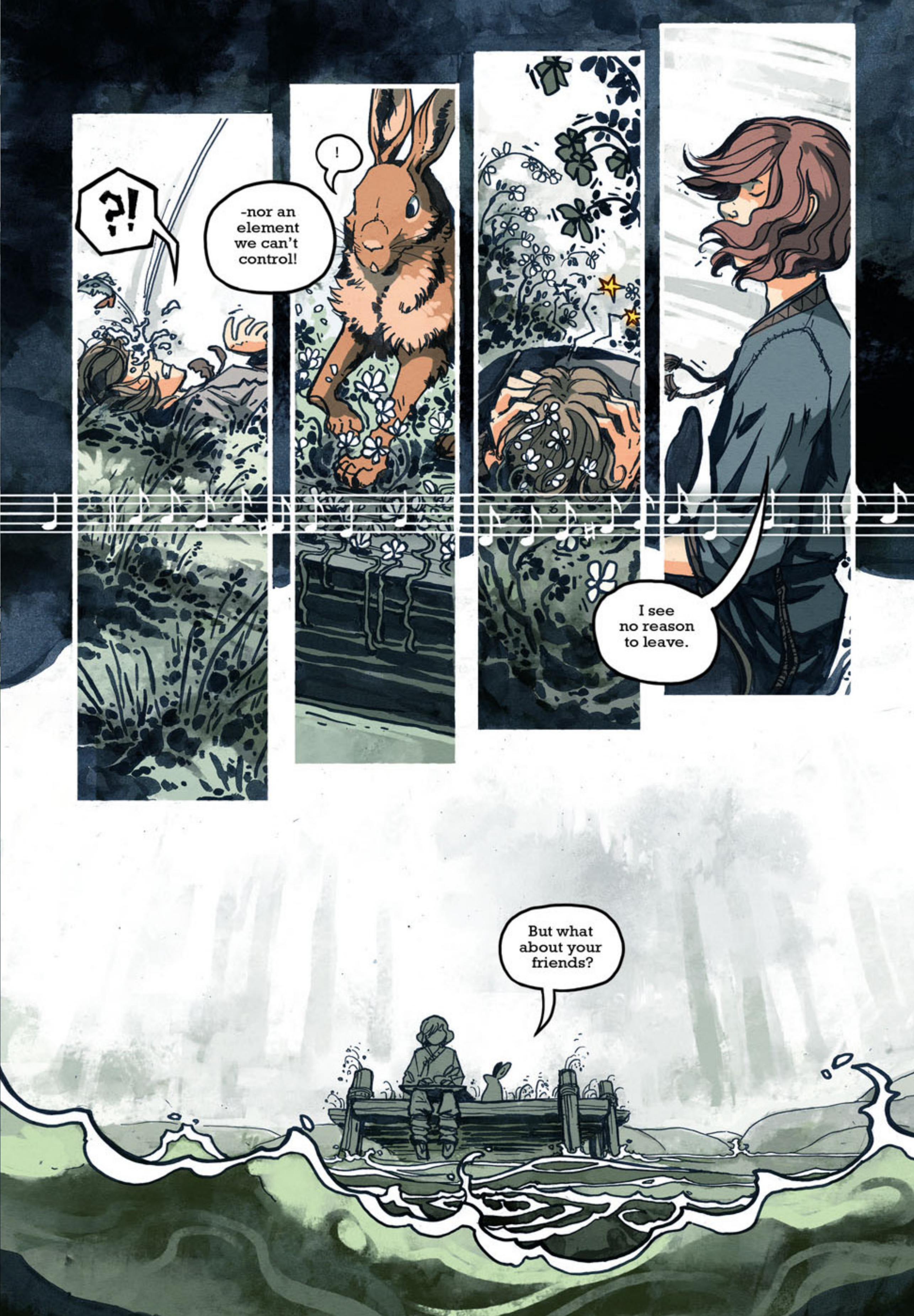

We can stay here forever!
Together!
Thank you for amusing us with your *dumbassery!*
I hope you don't mind that we're going to ignore your existence from now on.
Dumbasses.
Hannu! Do something!
Like what? He's right; we lost.

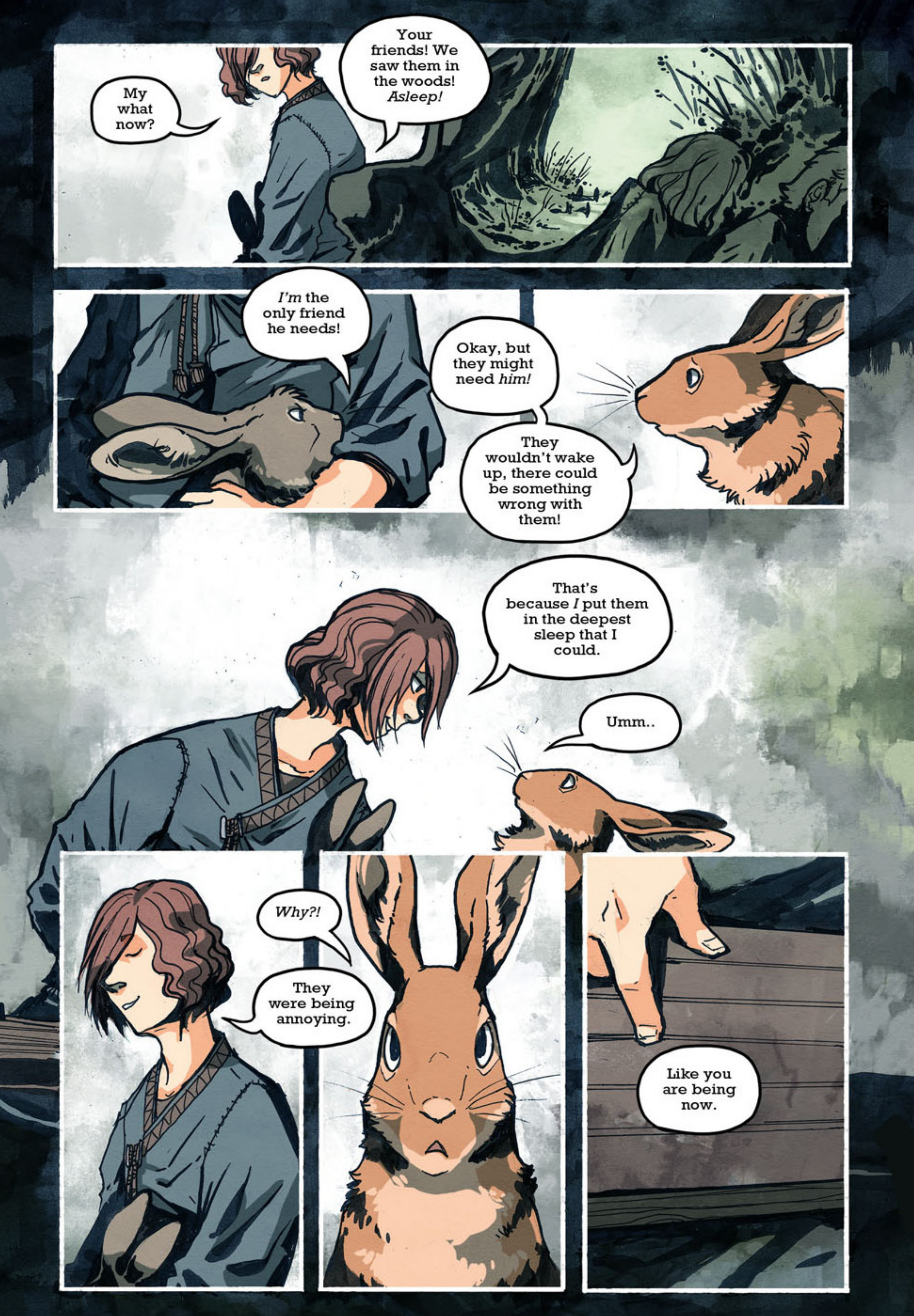

We can't force him to go if he doesn't want to.
At least try reasoning with him! Say something nice, he needs to know that we're not his enemies.
Fine, I'll *try*. But only because it makes you happy!
Hey, It's nice that you're not playing the guitar anymore...
...but could you *please* stop plinking on that thing, it's making my head ache. *Thank you!*
I'm sorry! I'm all out of niceness for today!
Some- times you're really useless, you know that?!
Yes!

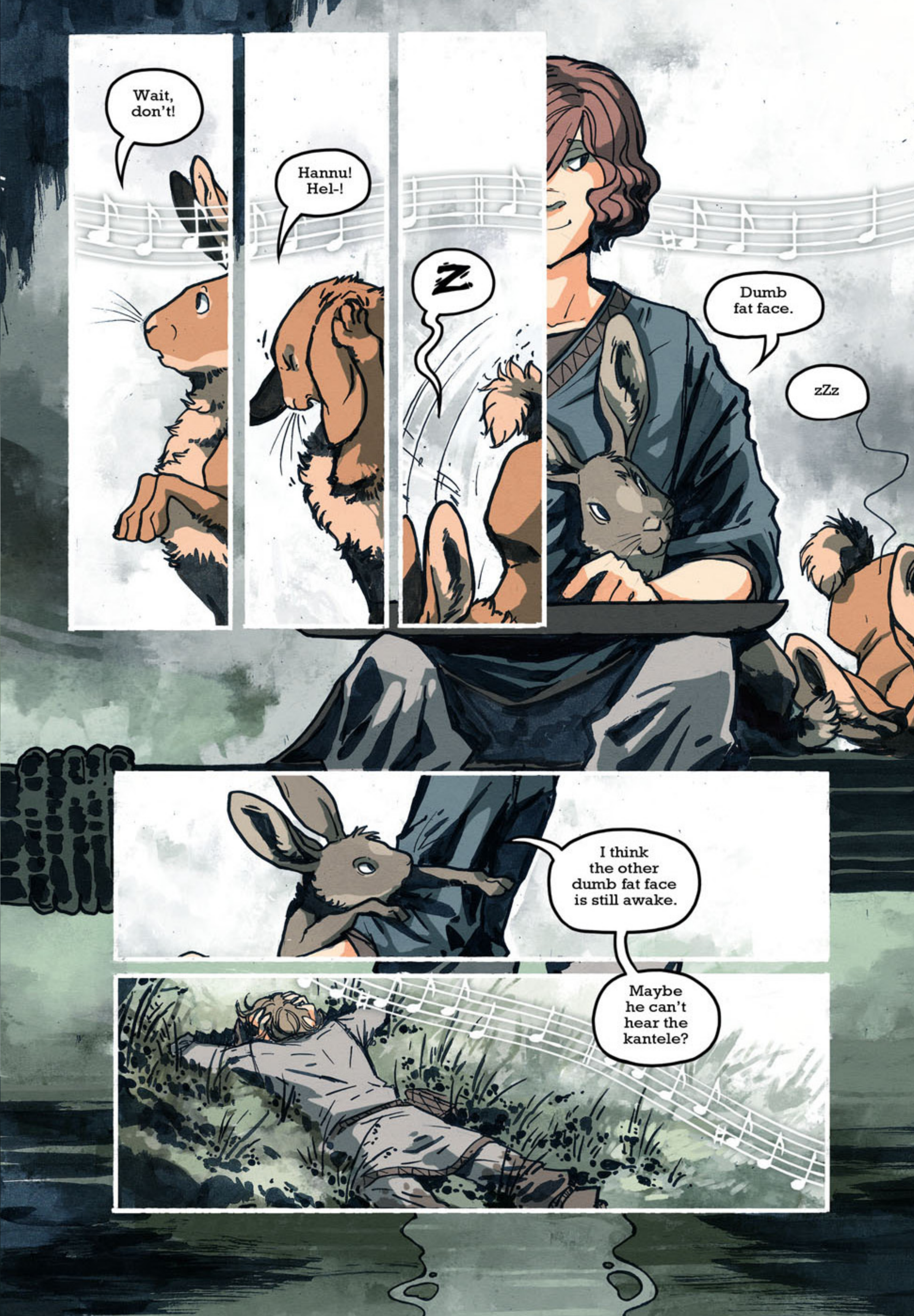

It's probably better if I handle this.
Mm.
Tuomi, may I talk to you for just a second?
Go away! Can't you see that we don't want you around?
I just...
You're trying to take my friend away from me!
I promise, I'm not. I just wish to know why Tuomi is so adamant about staying
You have such a nice life at home!
Pfth!

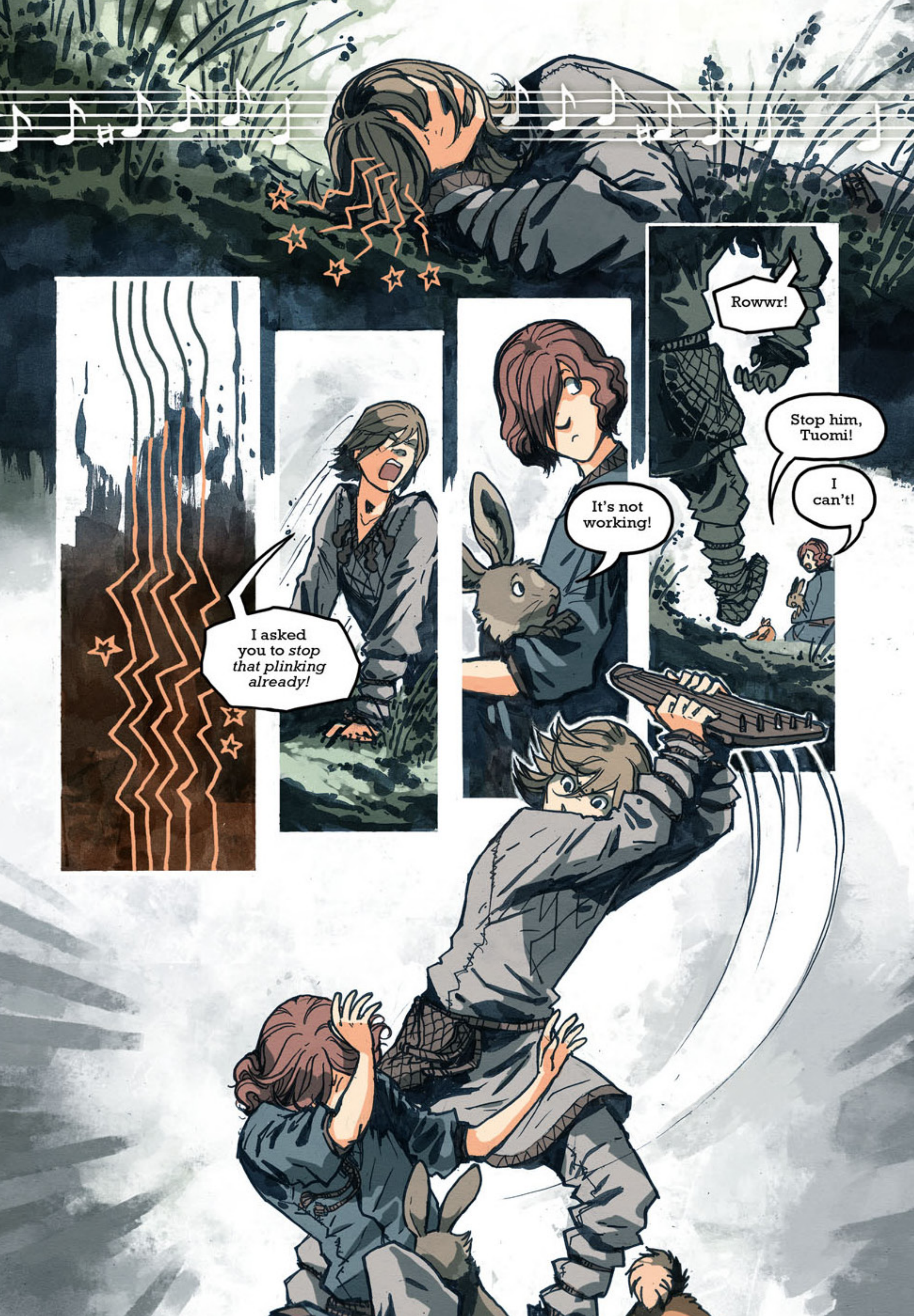

Of course you think that, you're a *dog*. You can't understand how annoying it is to be a human!
Or a *hare!*
Dumb dog.
Here no-one expects us to do anything!
Or makes stupid rules for us to follow!
We're completely free!
And we have power over *everything!*

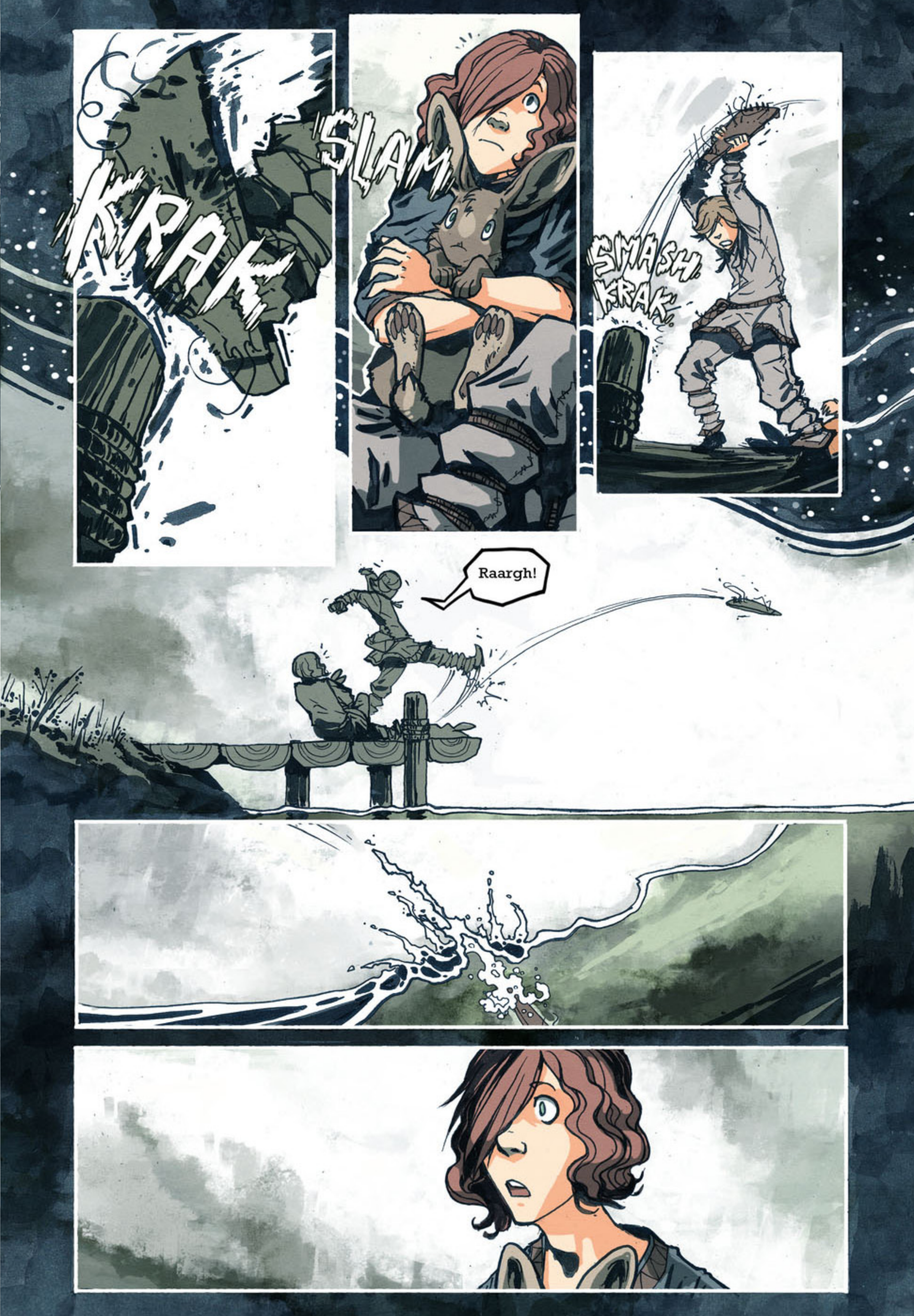

ROWWRRR
!?!
There's not a single thing we need-

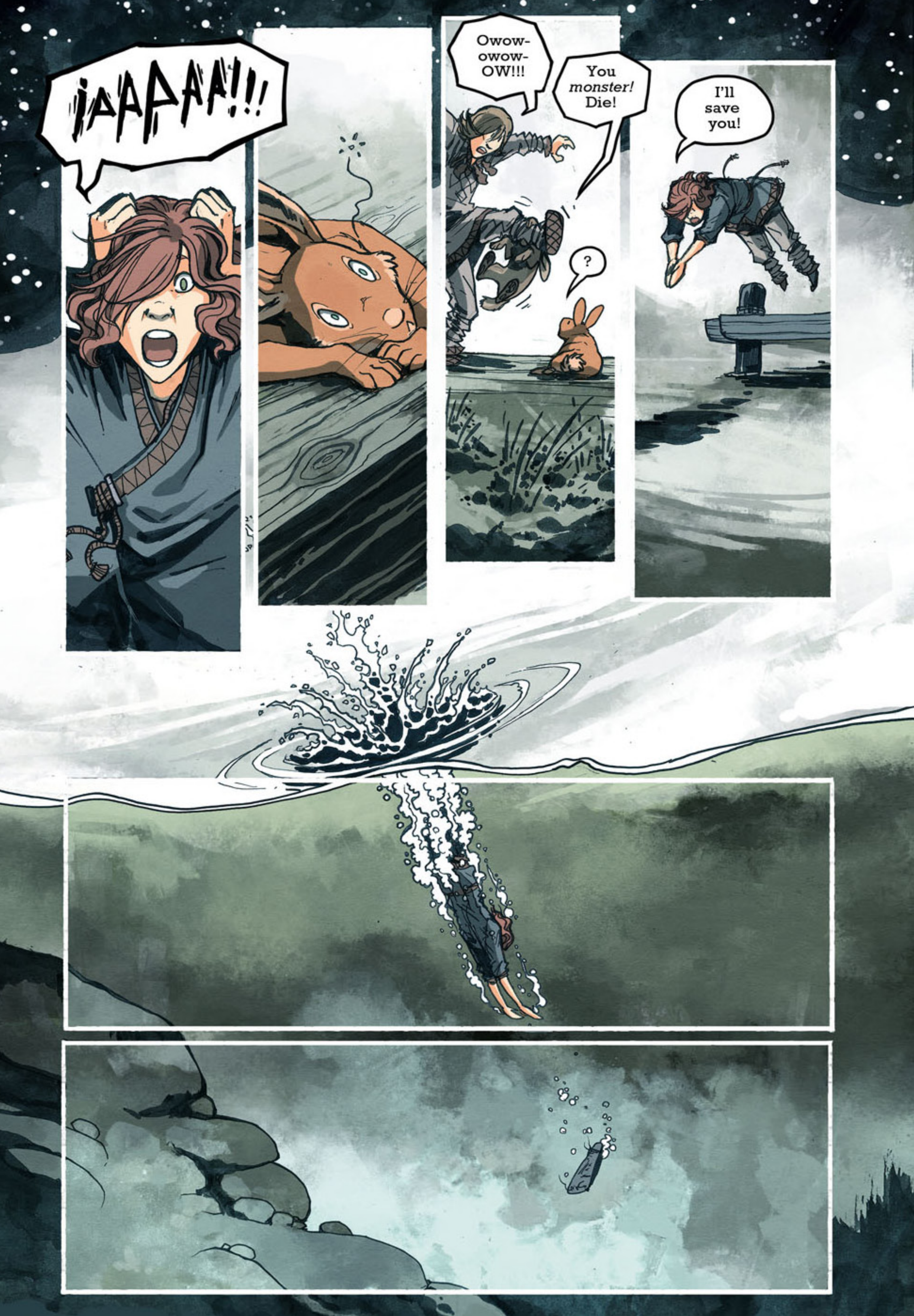

?!
-nor an element we can't control!
!
I see no reason to leave.
But what about your friends?

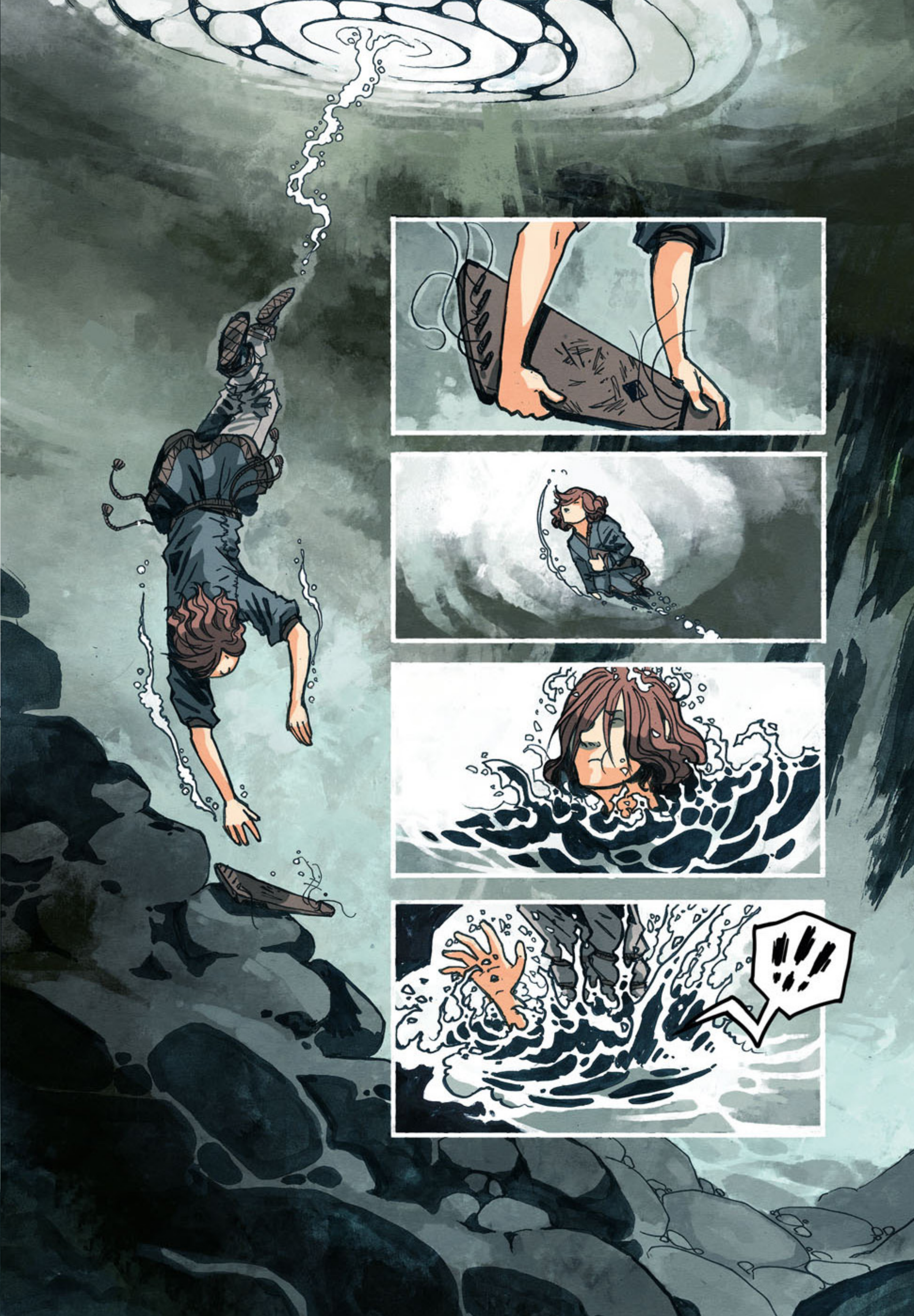

My what now?
Your friends! We saw them in the woods! *Asleep!*
I'm the only friend he needs!
Okay, but they might need *him!*
They wouldn't wake up, there could be something wrong with them!
That's because *I* put them in the deepest sleep that I could.
Umm..
Why?!
They were being annoying.
Like you are being now.

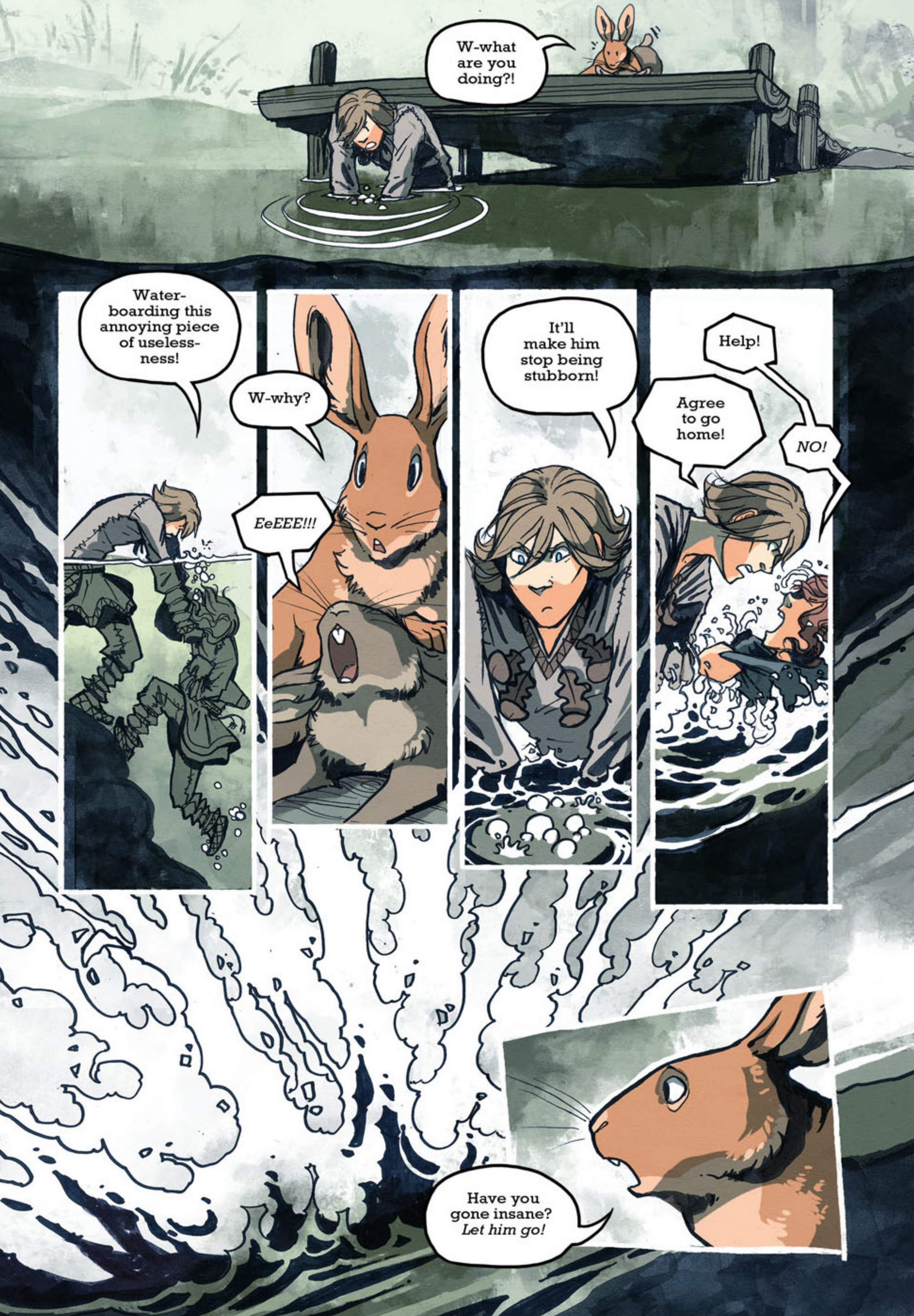

Wait, don't!
Hannu! Hel-!
Z
Dumb fat face.
zZz
I think the other dumb fat face is still awake.
Maybe he can't hear the kantele?

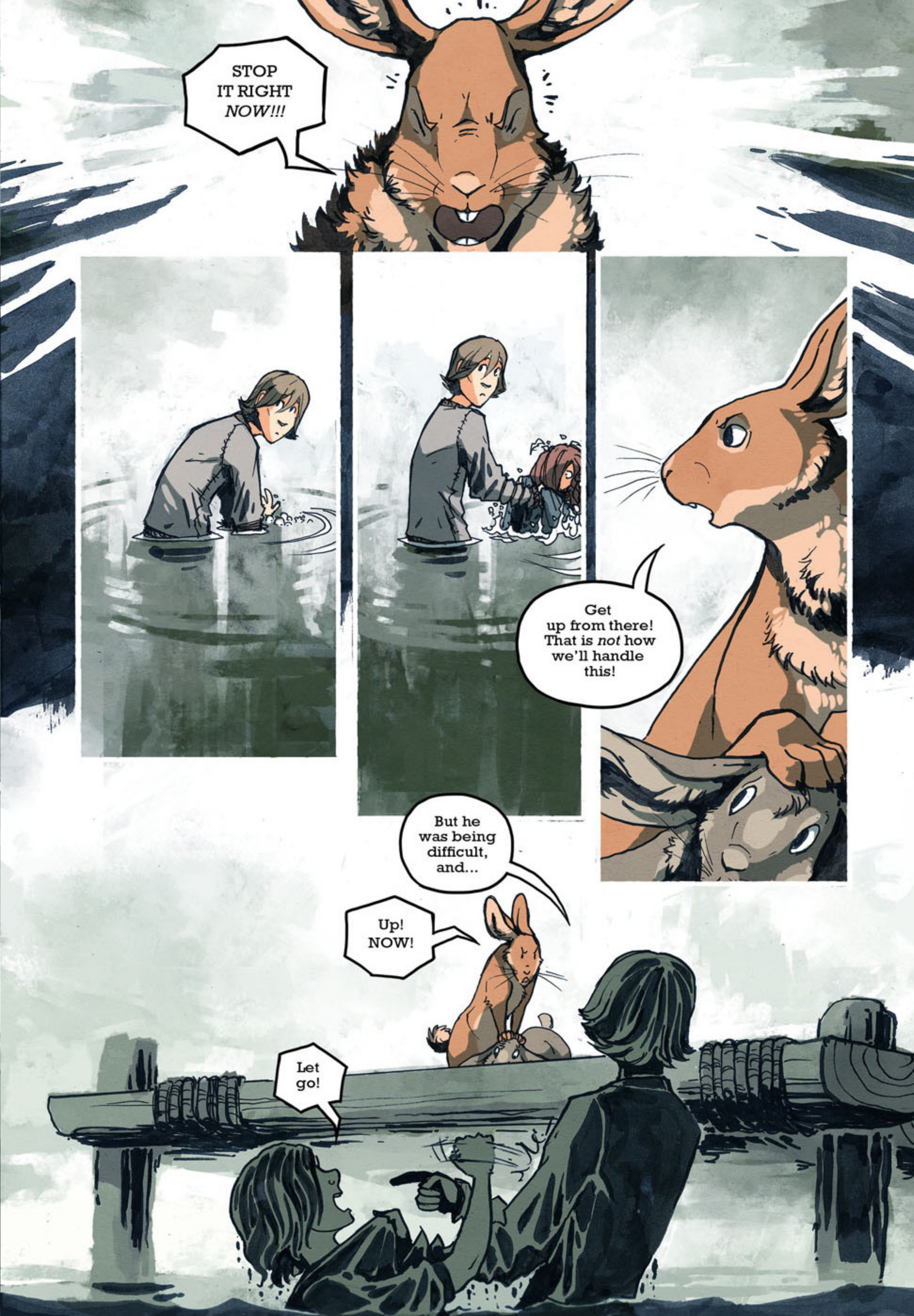

I asked you to *stop that plinking already!*
It's not working!
Rowwr!
Stop him, Tuomi!
I can't!

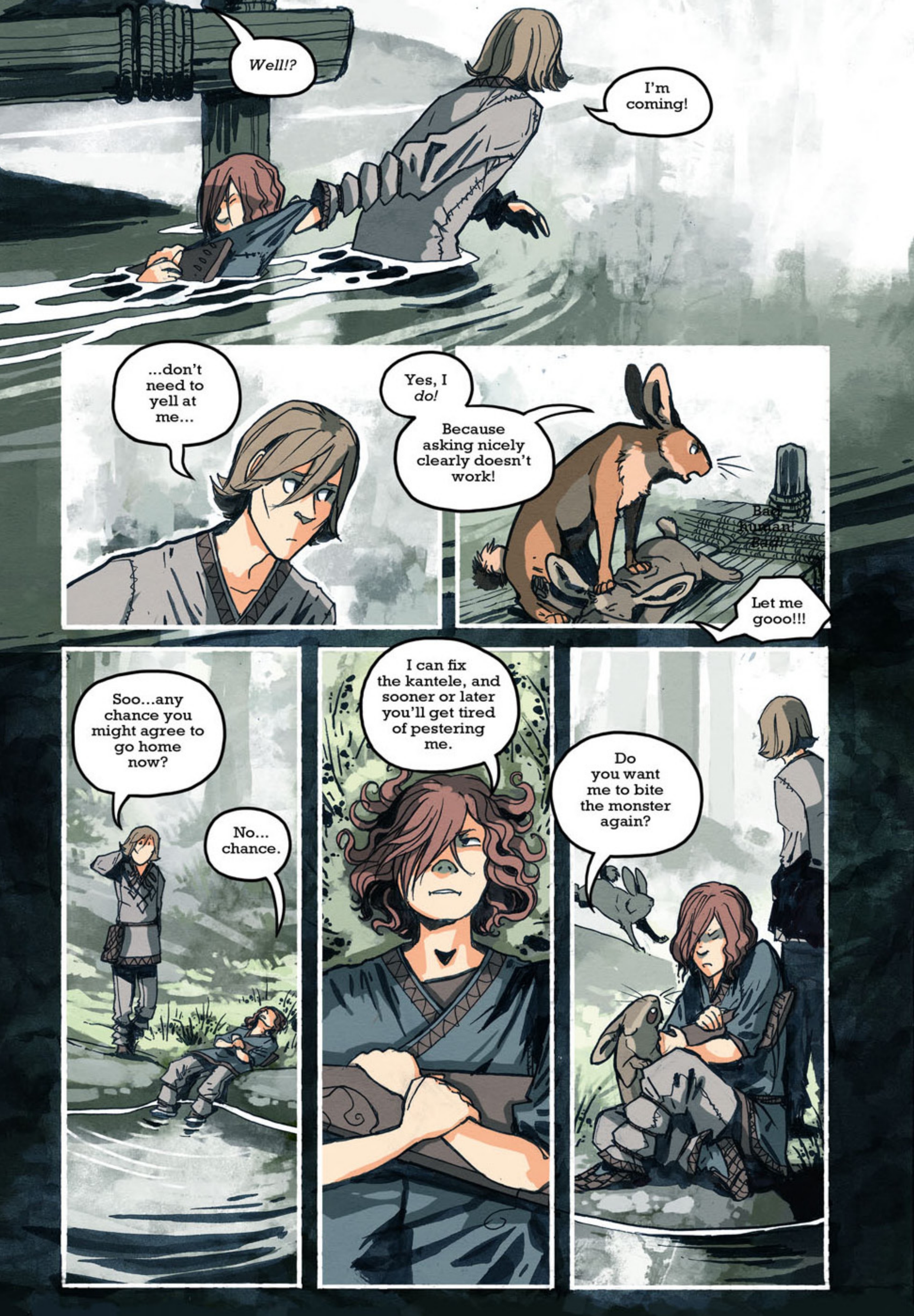

KRAK
SLAM
SMASH
KRAK
Raargh!

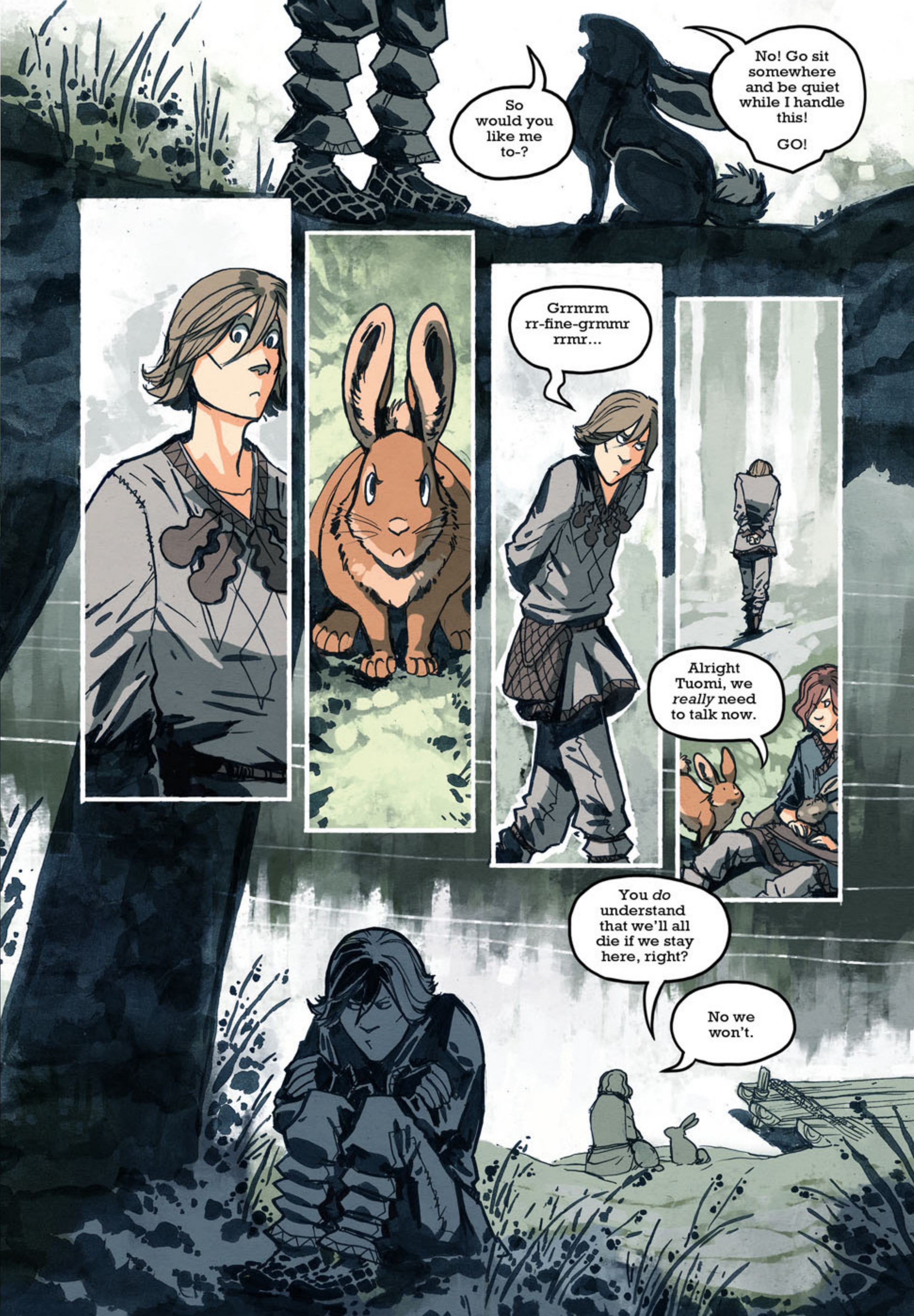

¡AAAAA!!!
Owow-owow-OW!!!
You *monster!* Die!
?
I'll save you!



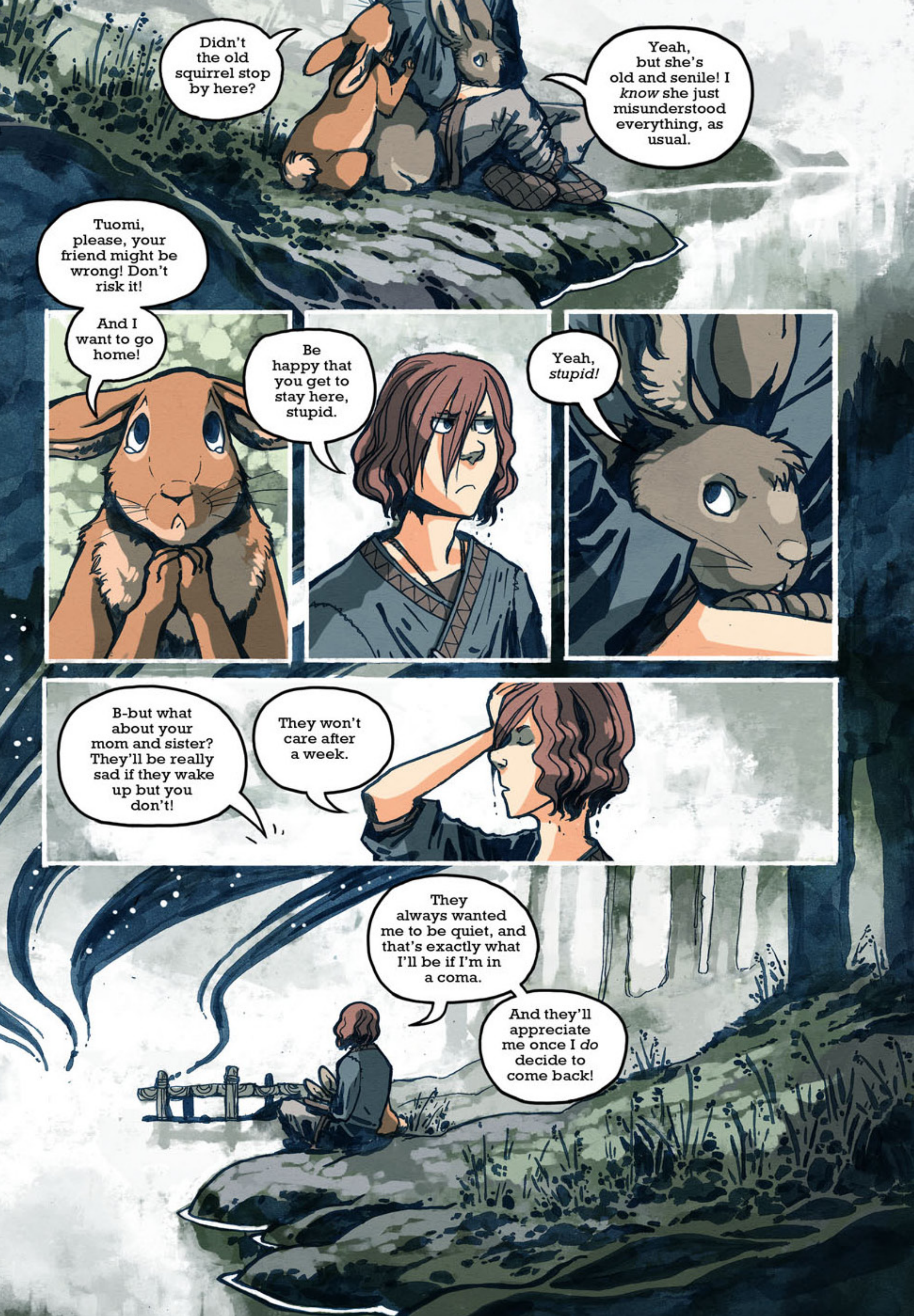

W-what are you doing?!
Water-boarding this annoying piece of useless-ness!
W-why?
EeEEE!!!
It'll make him stop being stubborn!
Help!
Agree to go home!
NO!
Have you gone insane? *Let him go!*

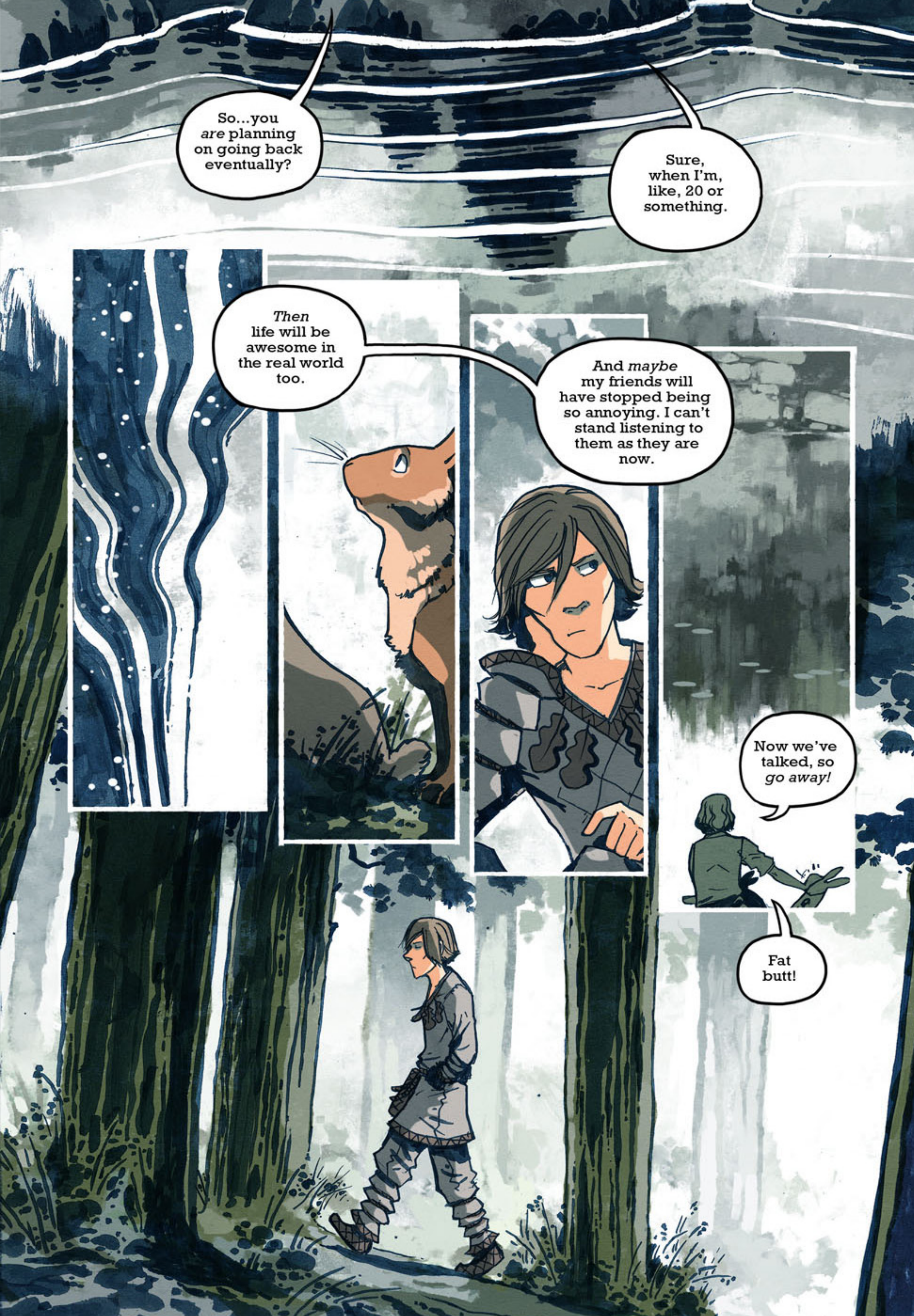

STOP IT RIGHT *NOW*!!!
Get up from there! That is *not* how we'll handle this!
But he was being difficult, and...
Up! NOW!
Let go!

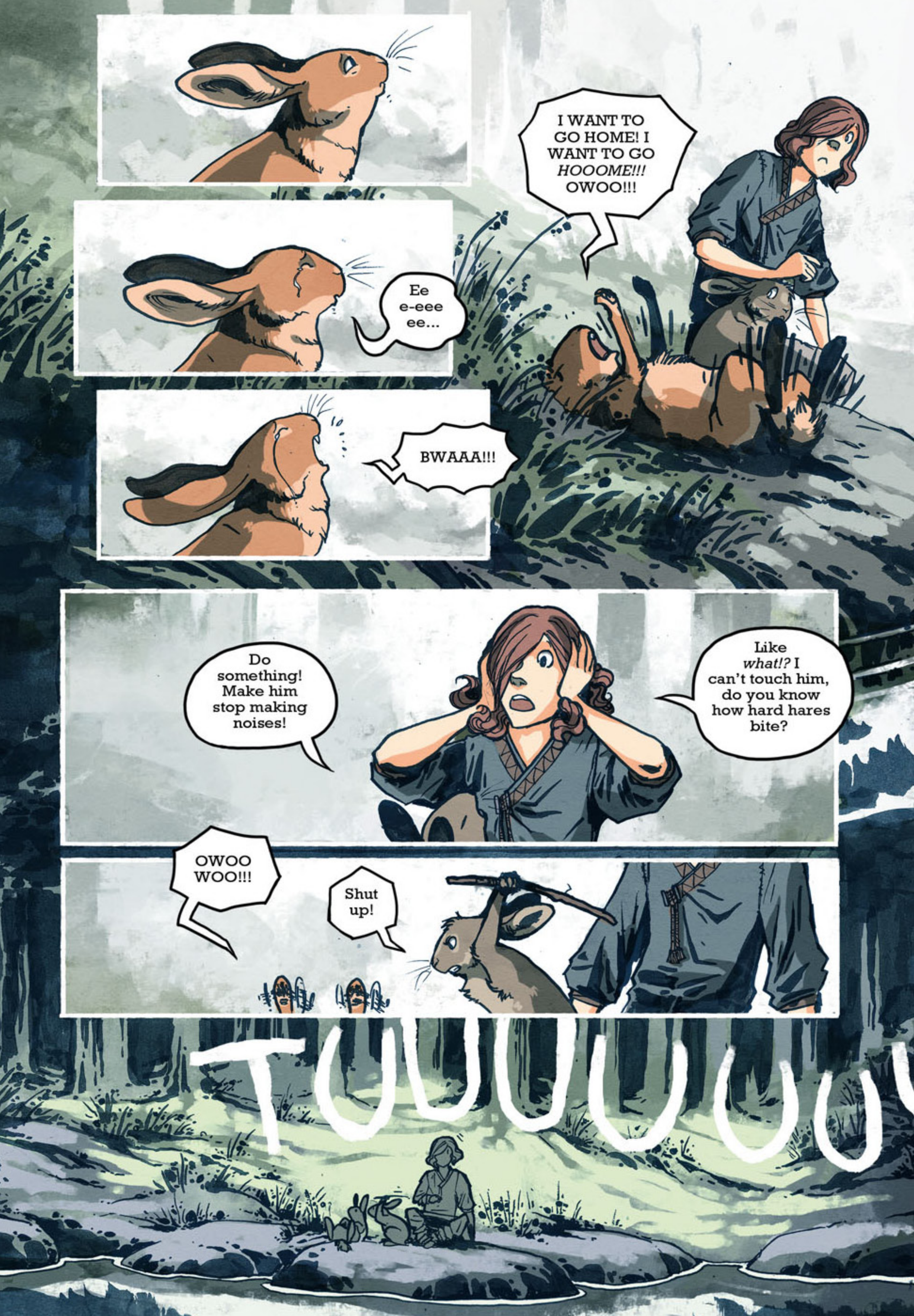

Well!?
I'm coming!
...don't need to yell at me...
Yes, I *do!*
Because asking nicely clearly doesn't work!
Bad human! Bad!
Let me gooo!!!
Soo...any chance you might agree to go home now?
No... chance.
I can fix the kantele, and sooner or later you'll get tired of pestering me.
Do you want me to bite the monster again?

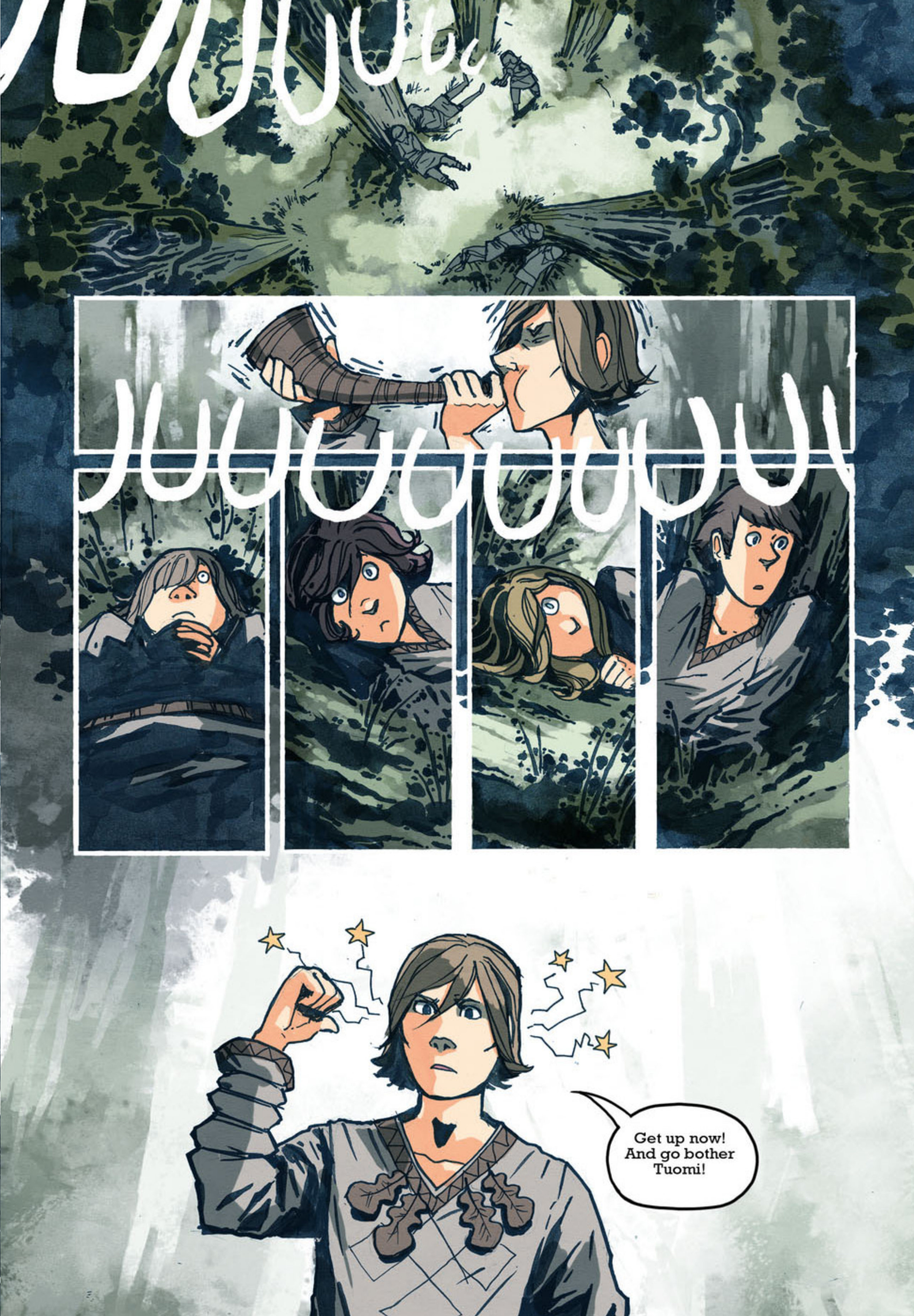

So would you like me to-?
No! Go sit somewhere and be quiet while I handle this!

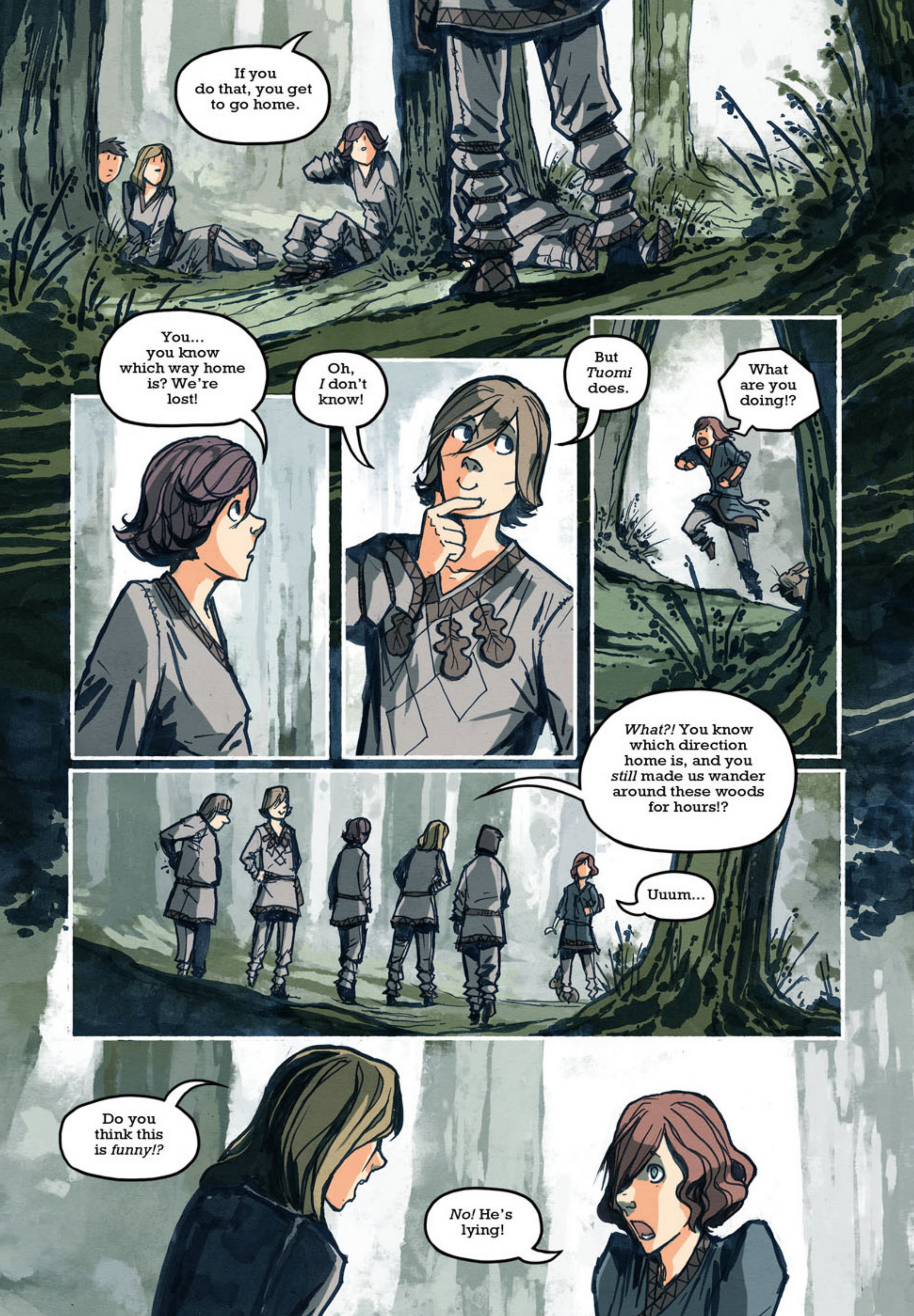
GO!
Grrmrm rr-fine-grmmr rrmr...
Alright Tuomi, we *really* need to talk now.
You *do* understand that we'll all die if we stay here, right?
No we won't.

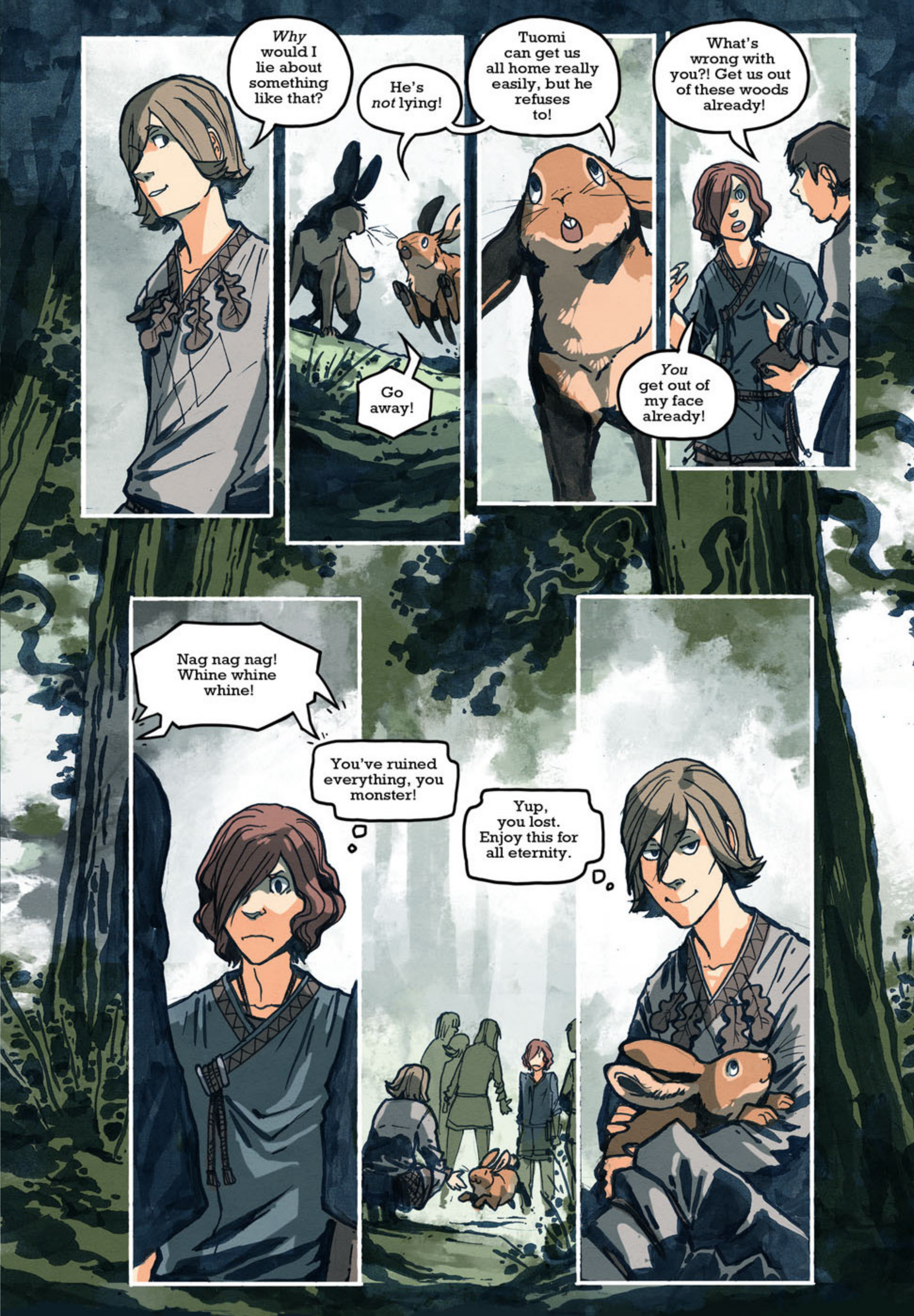

Didn't the old squirrel stop by here?
Yeah, but she's old and senile! I *know* she just misunderstood everything, as usual.
Tuomi, please, your friend might be wrong! Don't risk it!
And I want to go home!
Be happy that you get to stay here, stupid.
Yeah, *stupid!*
B-but what about your mom and sister? They'll be really sad if they wake up but you don't!
They won't care after a week.
They always wanted me to be quiet, and that's exactly what I'll be if I'm in a coma.
And they'll appreciate me once I *do* decide to come back!

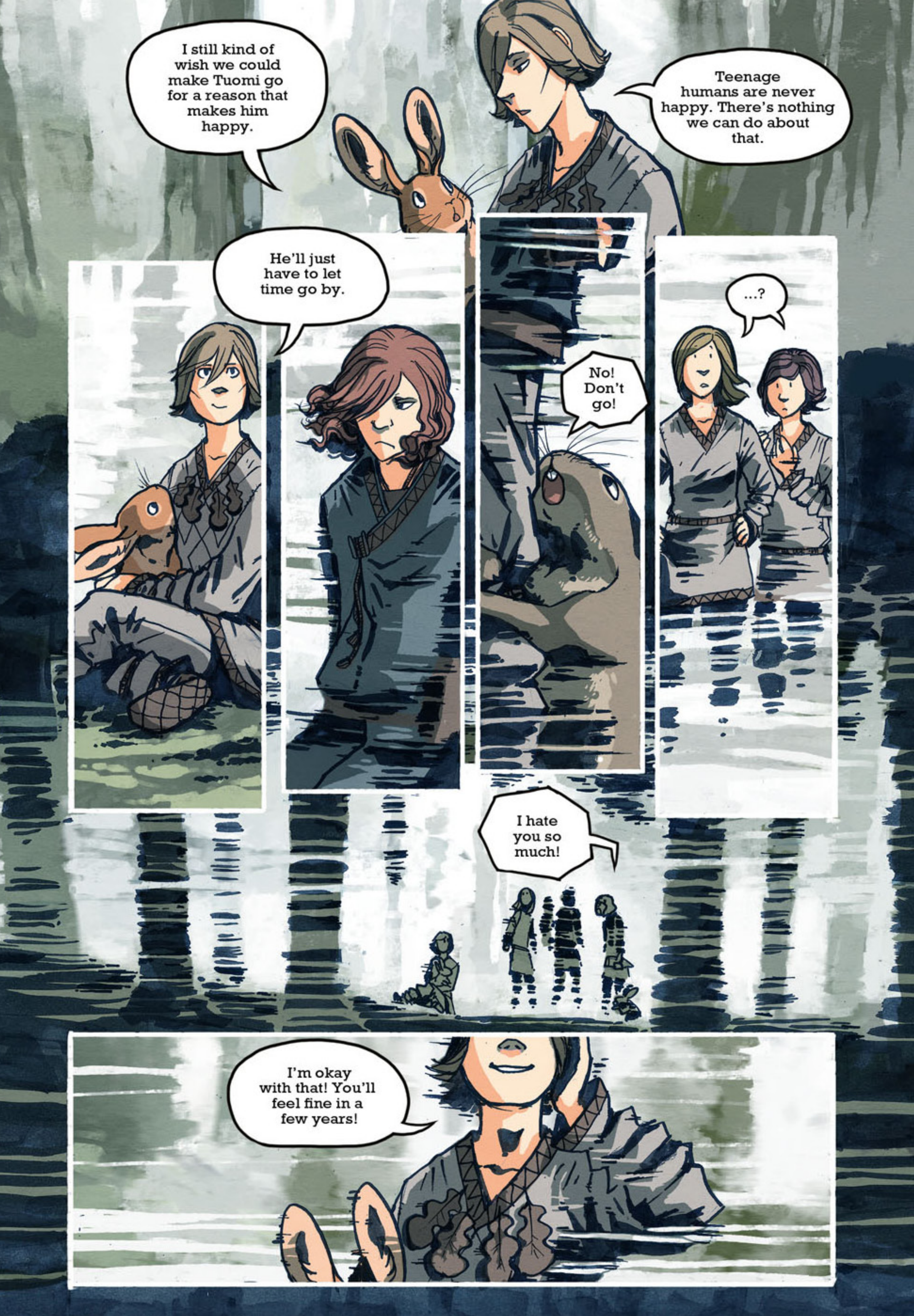

So...you *are* planning on going back eventually?
Sure, when I'm, like, 20 or something.
Then life will be awesome in the real world too.
And *maybe* my friends will have stopped being so annoying. I can't stand listening to them as they are now.
Now we've talked, so *go away!*
Fat butt!

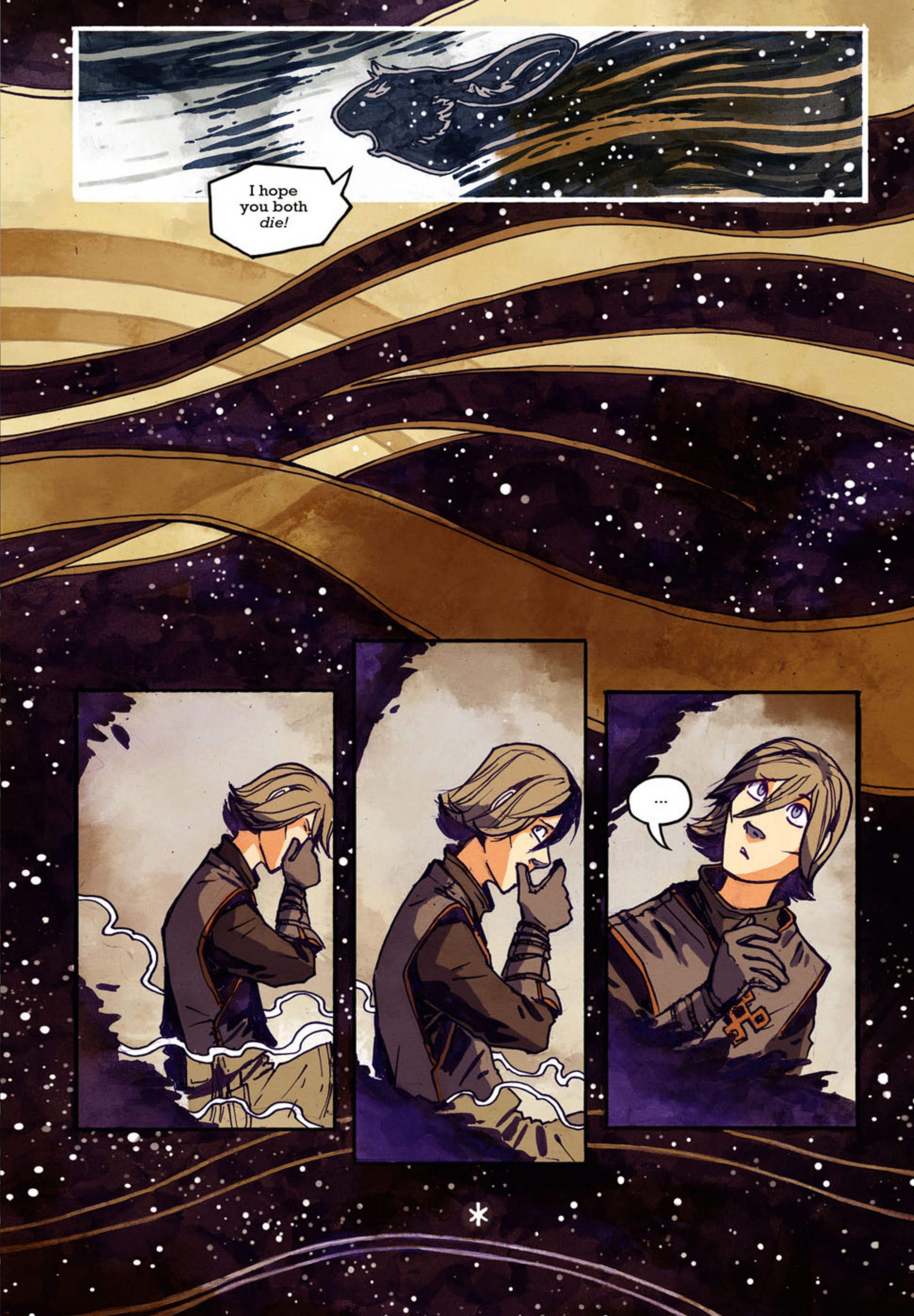

Ee e-eee ee...
BWAAA!!!
I WANT TO GO HOME! I WANT TO GO *HOOOME!!!* OWOO!!!
Do something! Make him stop making noises!
Like *what!?* I can't touch him, do you know how hard hares bite?
OWOO WOO!!!
Shut up!
TUUUUUU


Get up now!
And go bother
Tuomi!

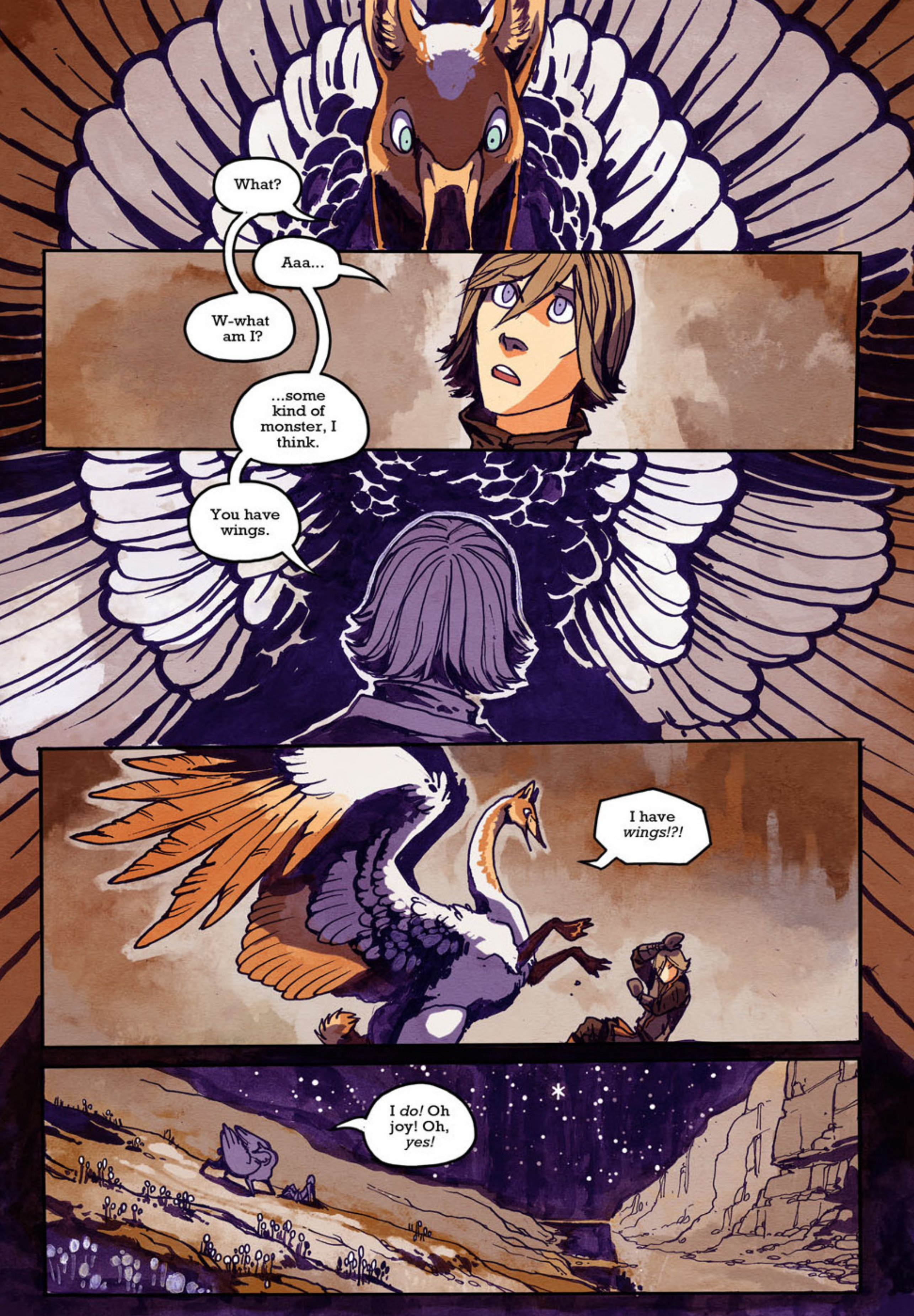

If you do that, you get to go home.
You... you know which way home is? We're lost!
Oh, *I* don't know!
But *Tuomi* does.
What are you doing!?
What?! You know which direction home is, and you *still* made us wander around these woods for hours!?
Uuum...
Do you think this is *funny!?*
No! He's lying!

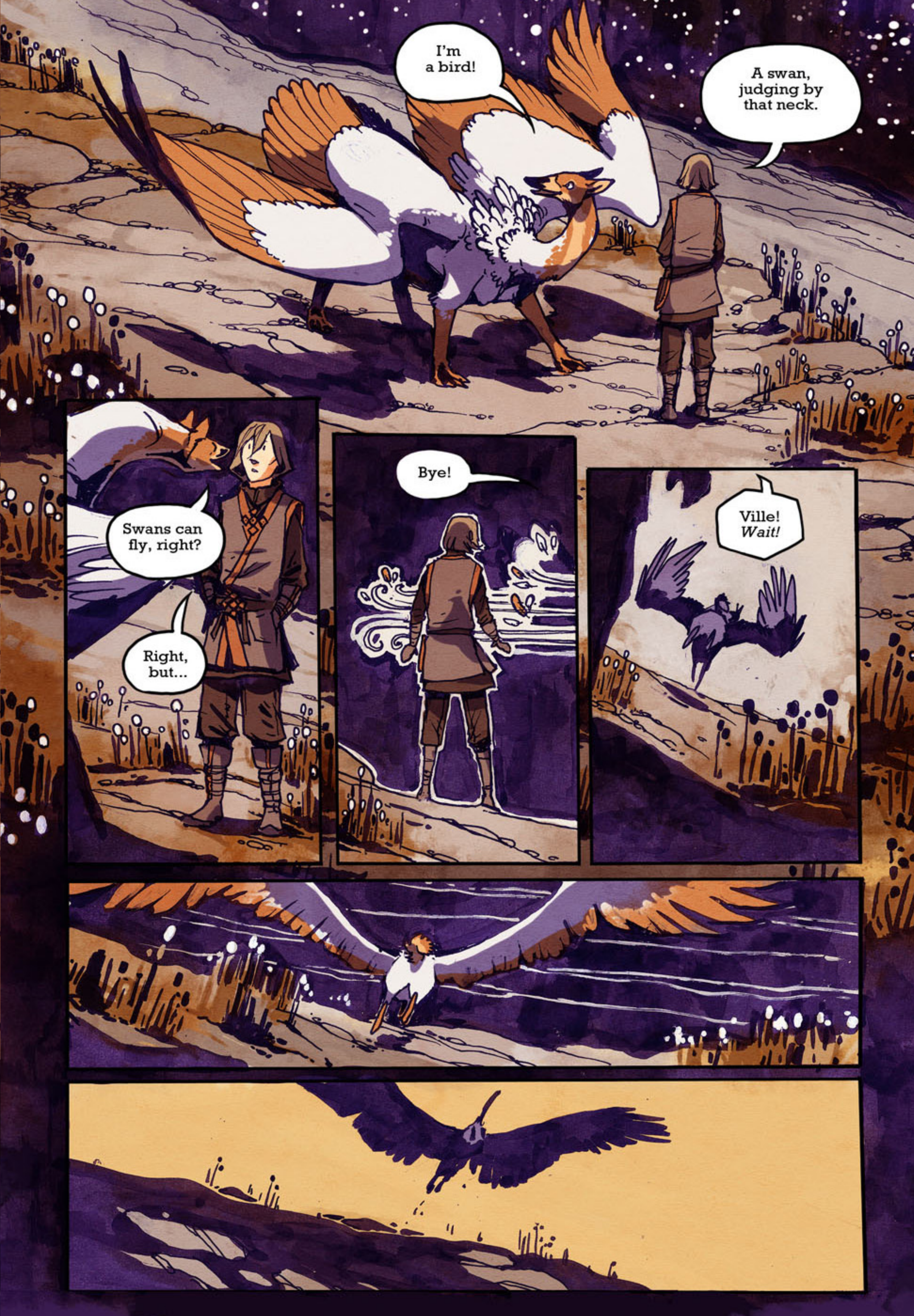

Why would I lie about something like that?
He's *not* lying!
Go away!
Tuomi can get us all home really easily, but he refuses to!
What's wrong with you?! Get us out of these woods already!
You get out of my face already!
Nag nag nag! Whine whine whine!
You've ruined everything, you monster!
Yup, you lost. Enjoy this for all eternity.

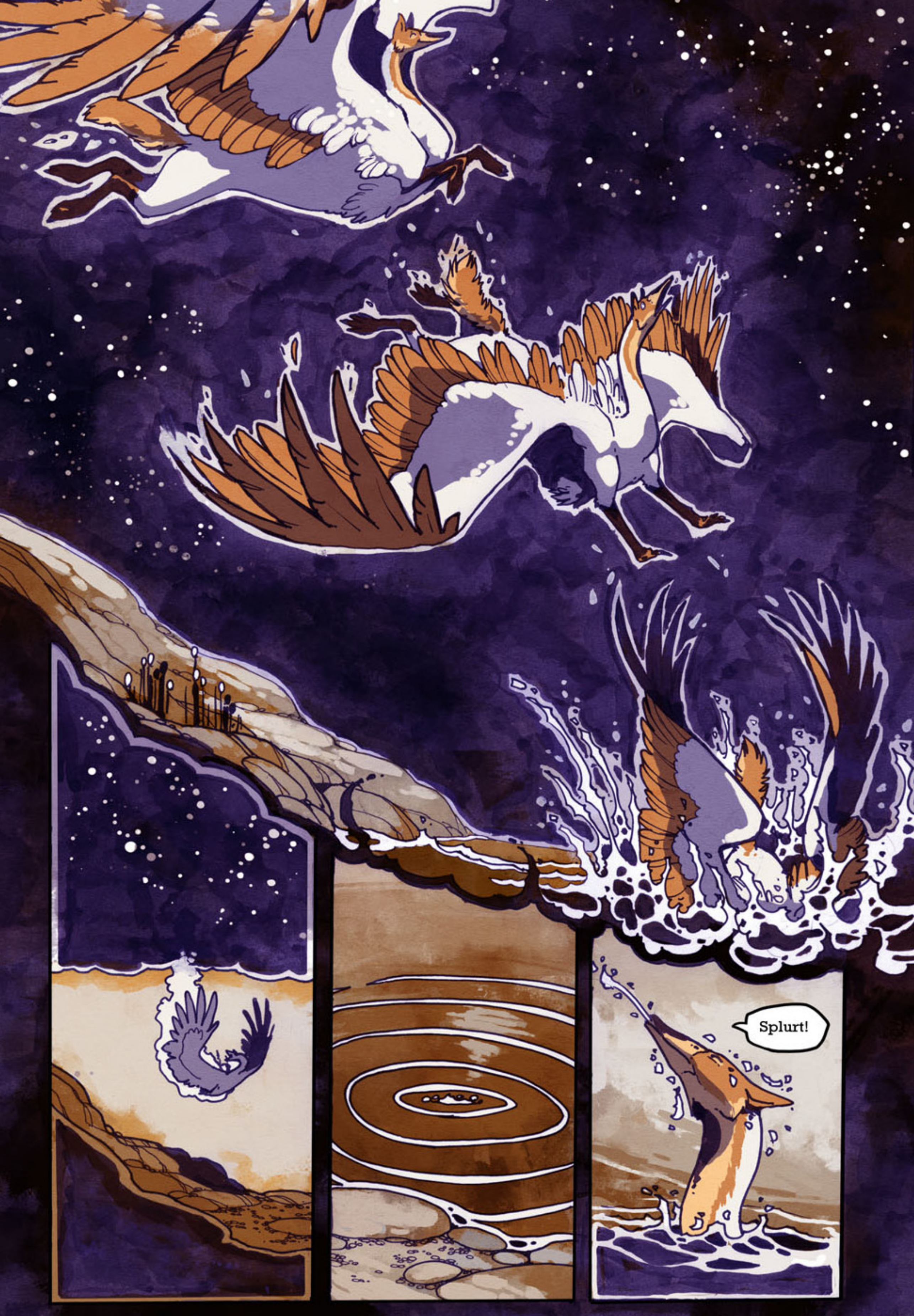

I still kind of wish we could make Tuomi go for a reason that makes him happy.
Teenage humans are never happy. There's nothing we can do about that.
He'll just have to let time go by.
No! Don't go!
...?
I hate you so much!
I'm okay with that! You'll feel fine in a few years!

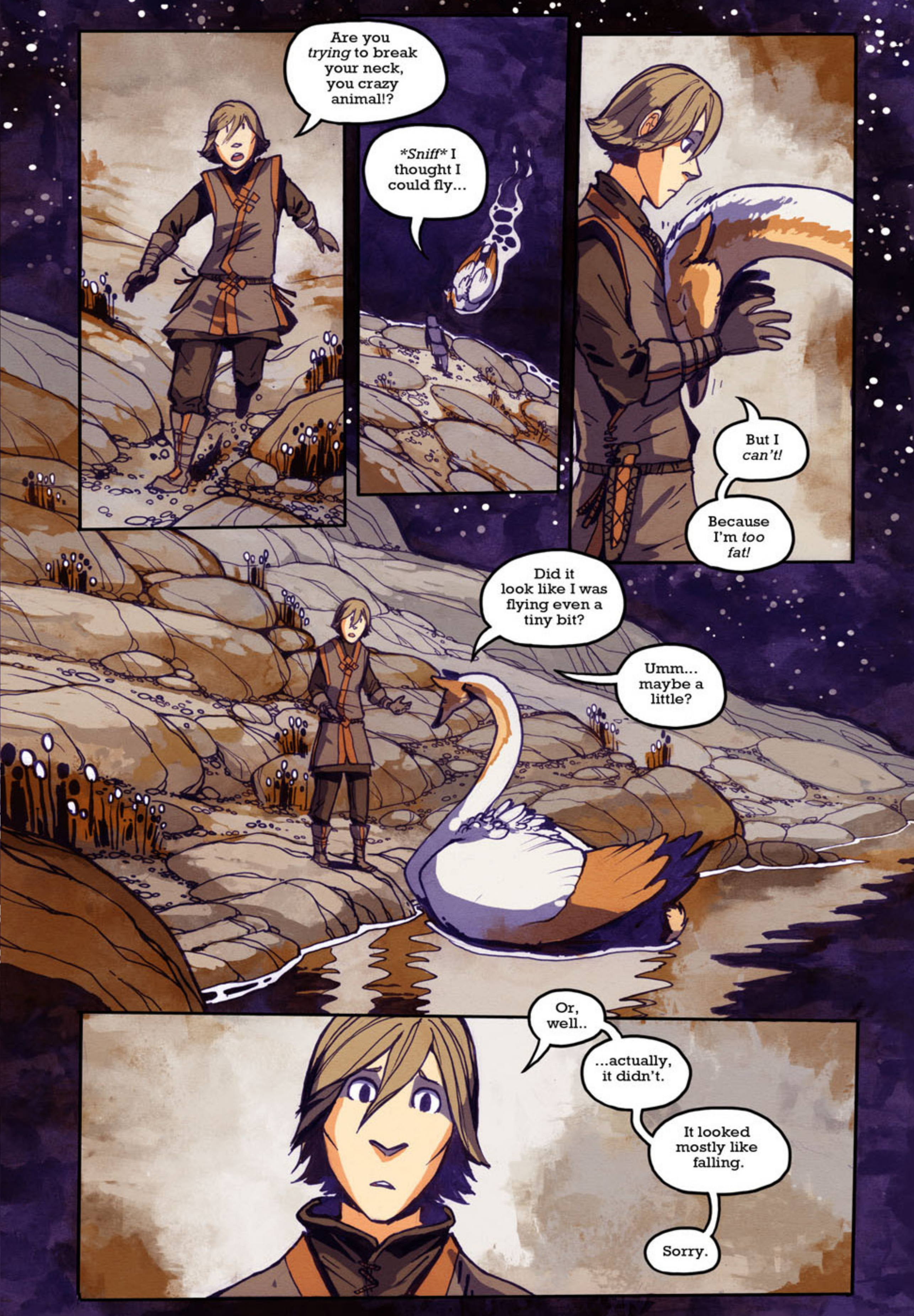

I hope you both *die!*
...
*

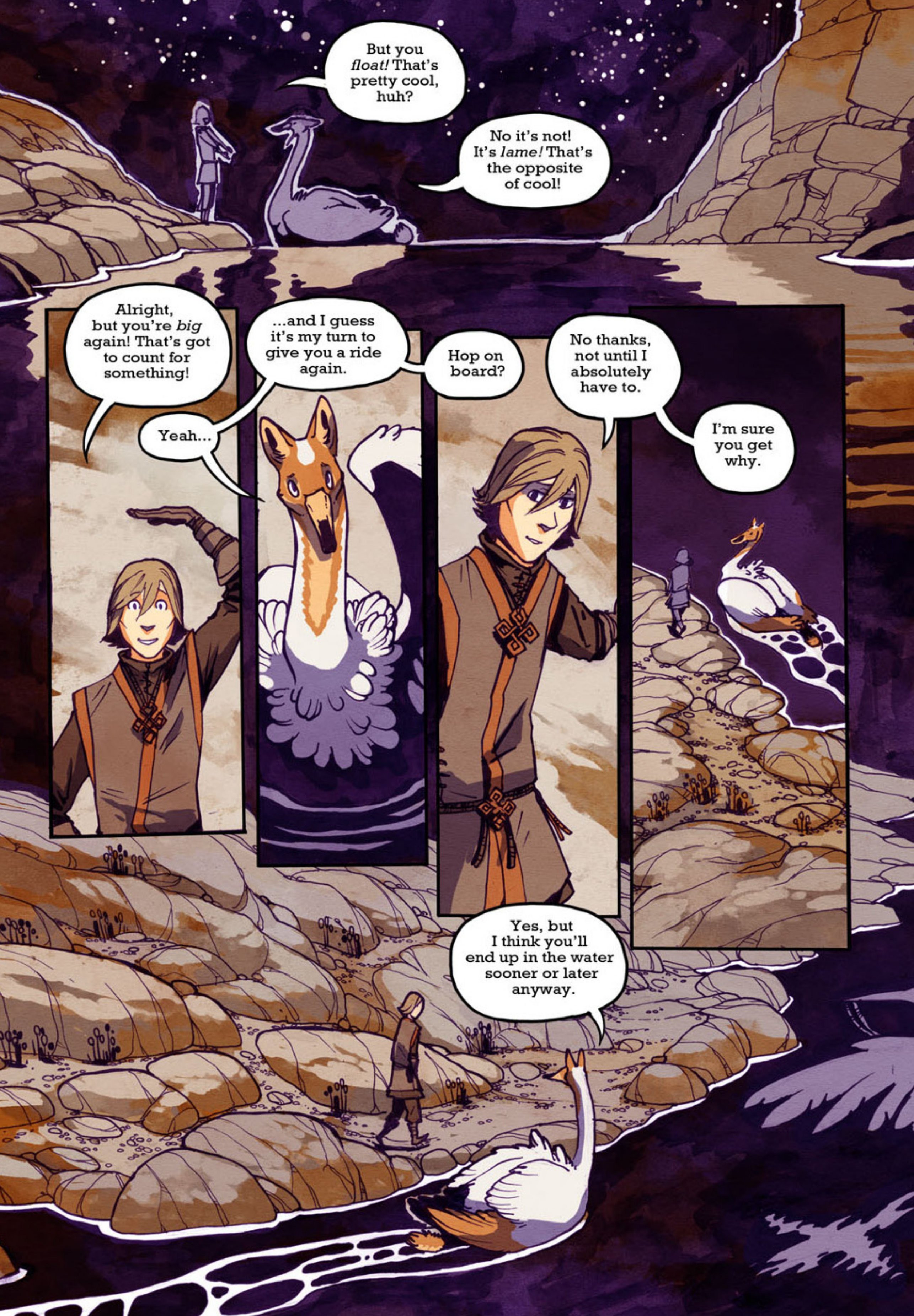
A Redtail's Dream

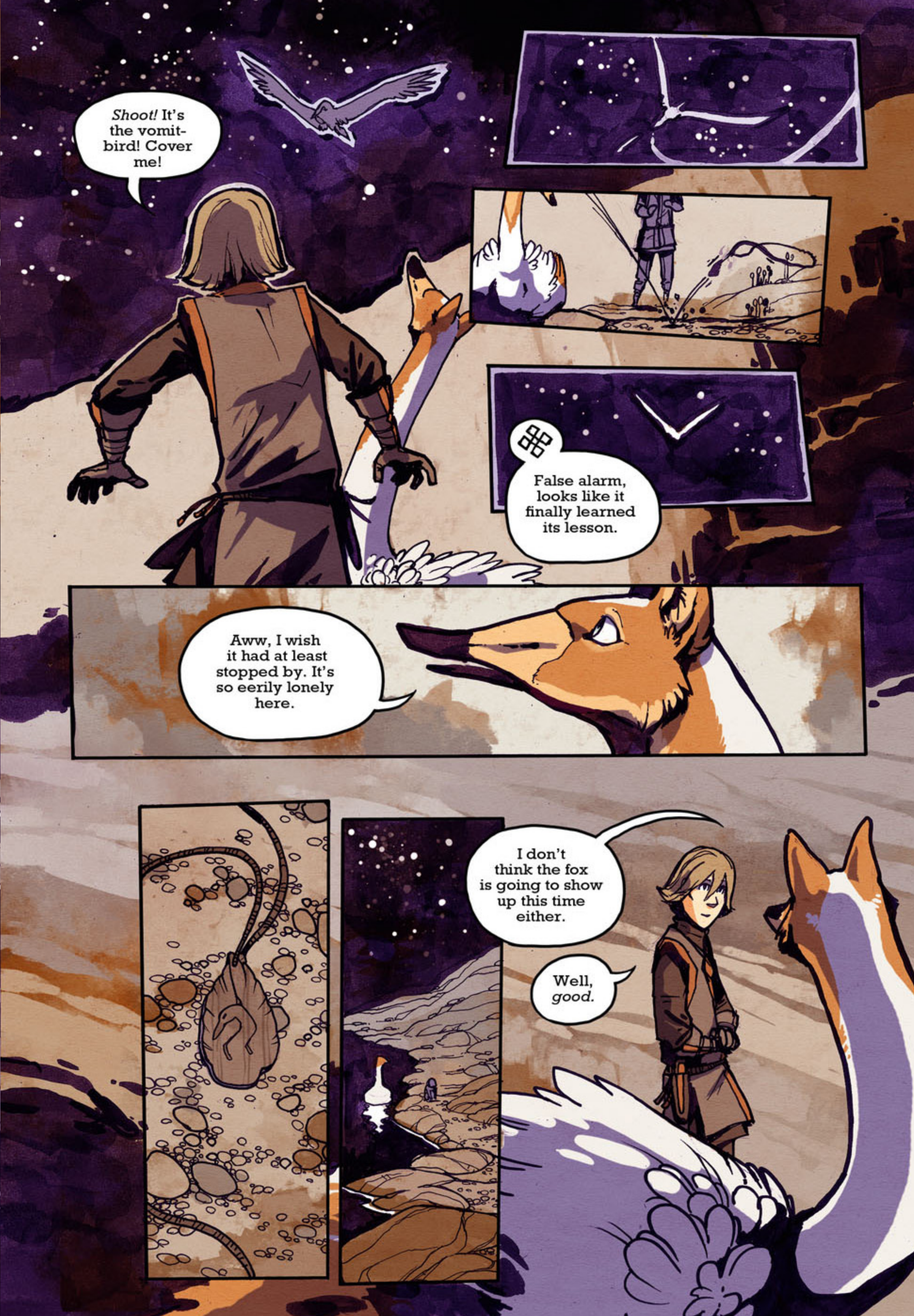

What?
Aaa...
W-what am I?
...some kind of monster, I think.
You have wings.
I have *wings!?!*
I *do!* Oh joy! Oh, *yes!*

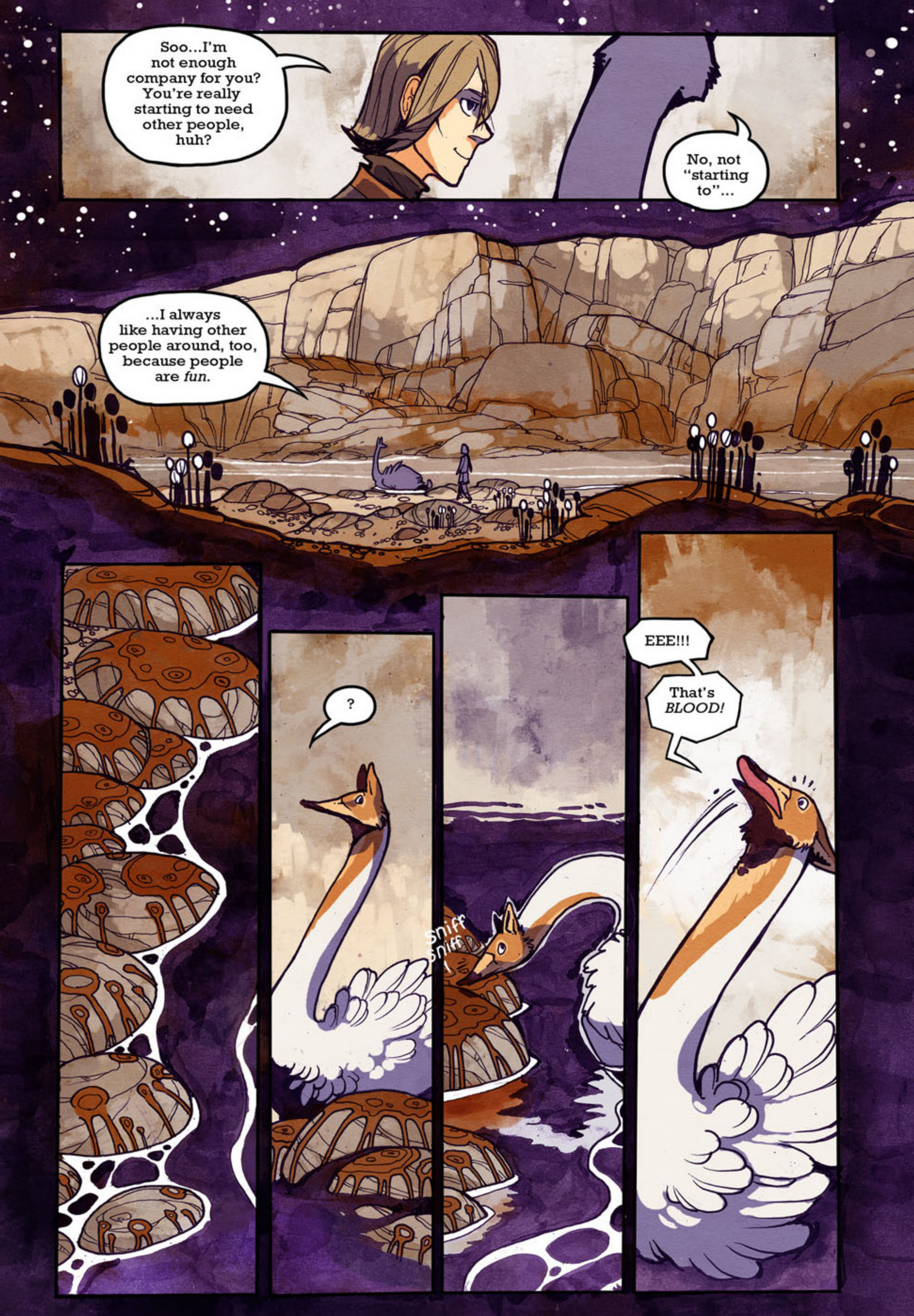

I'm a bird!
A swan, judging by that neck.
Swans can fly, right?
Right, but...
Bye!
Ville! *Wait!*

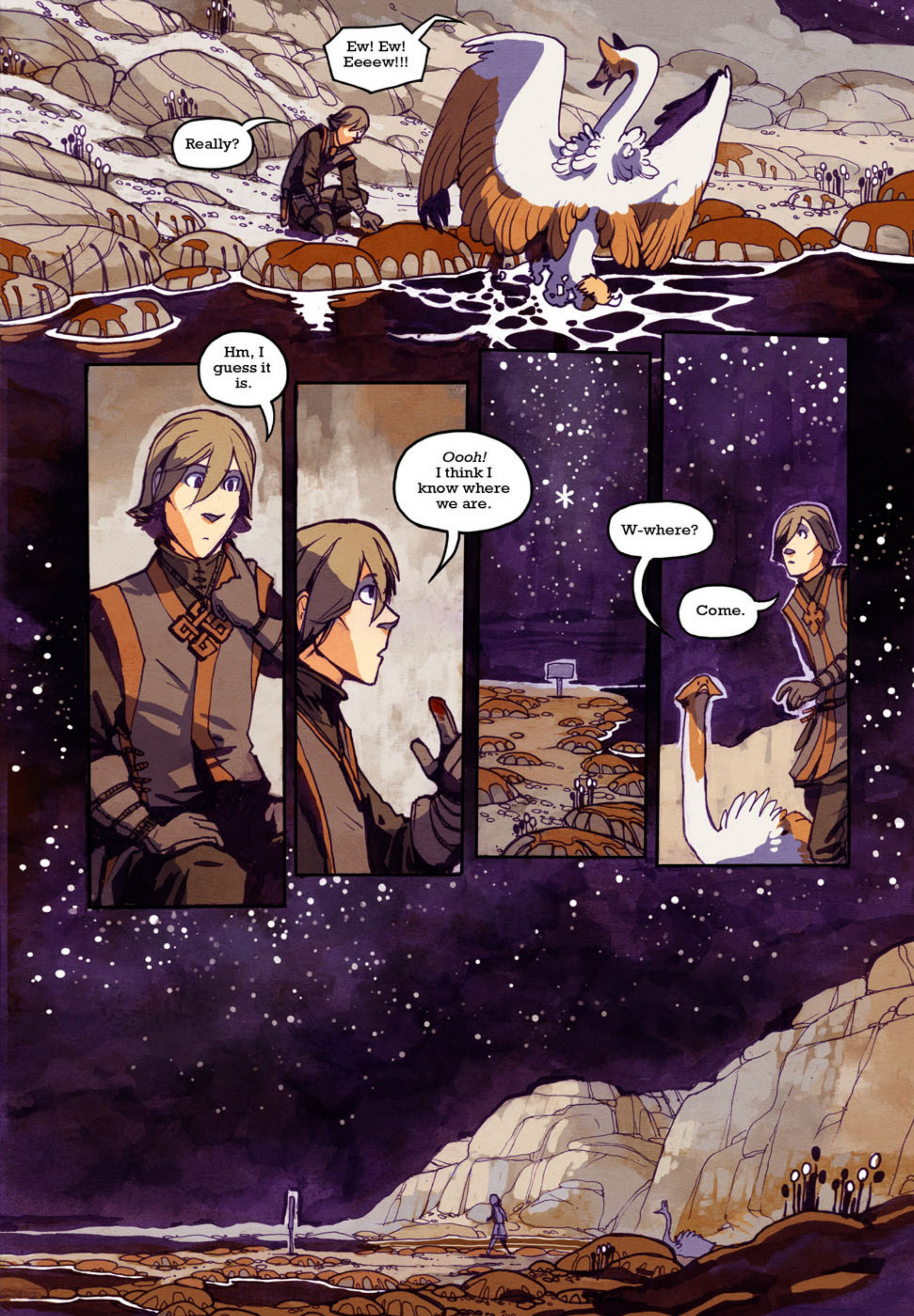

Splurt!

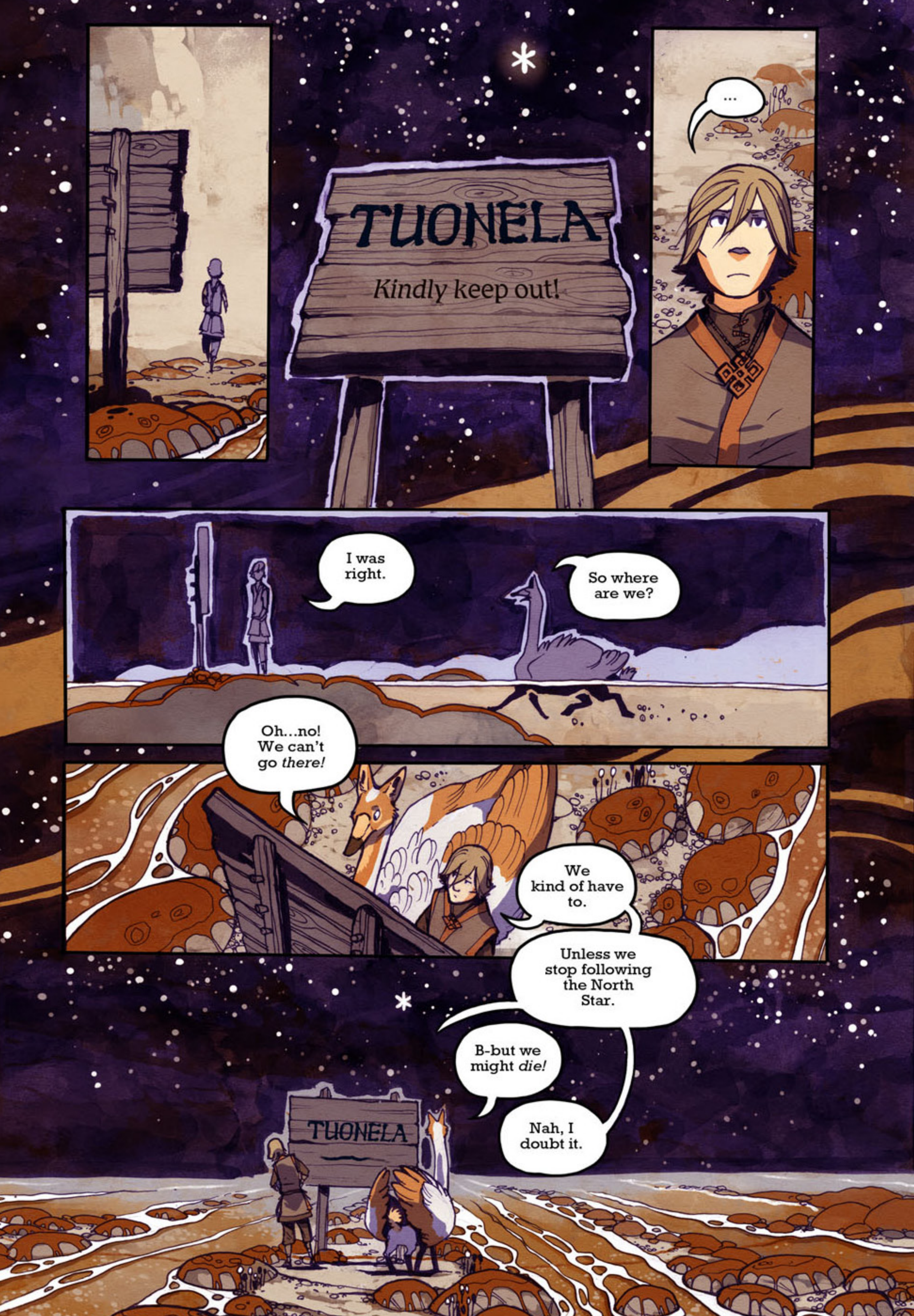

Are you *trying* to break your neck, you crazy animal!?
Sniff I thought I could fly...
But I *can't!*
Because I'm *too fat!*
Did it look like I was flying even a tiny bit?
Umm... maybe a little?
Or, well..
...actually, it didn't.
It looked mostly like falling.
Sorry.

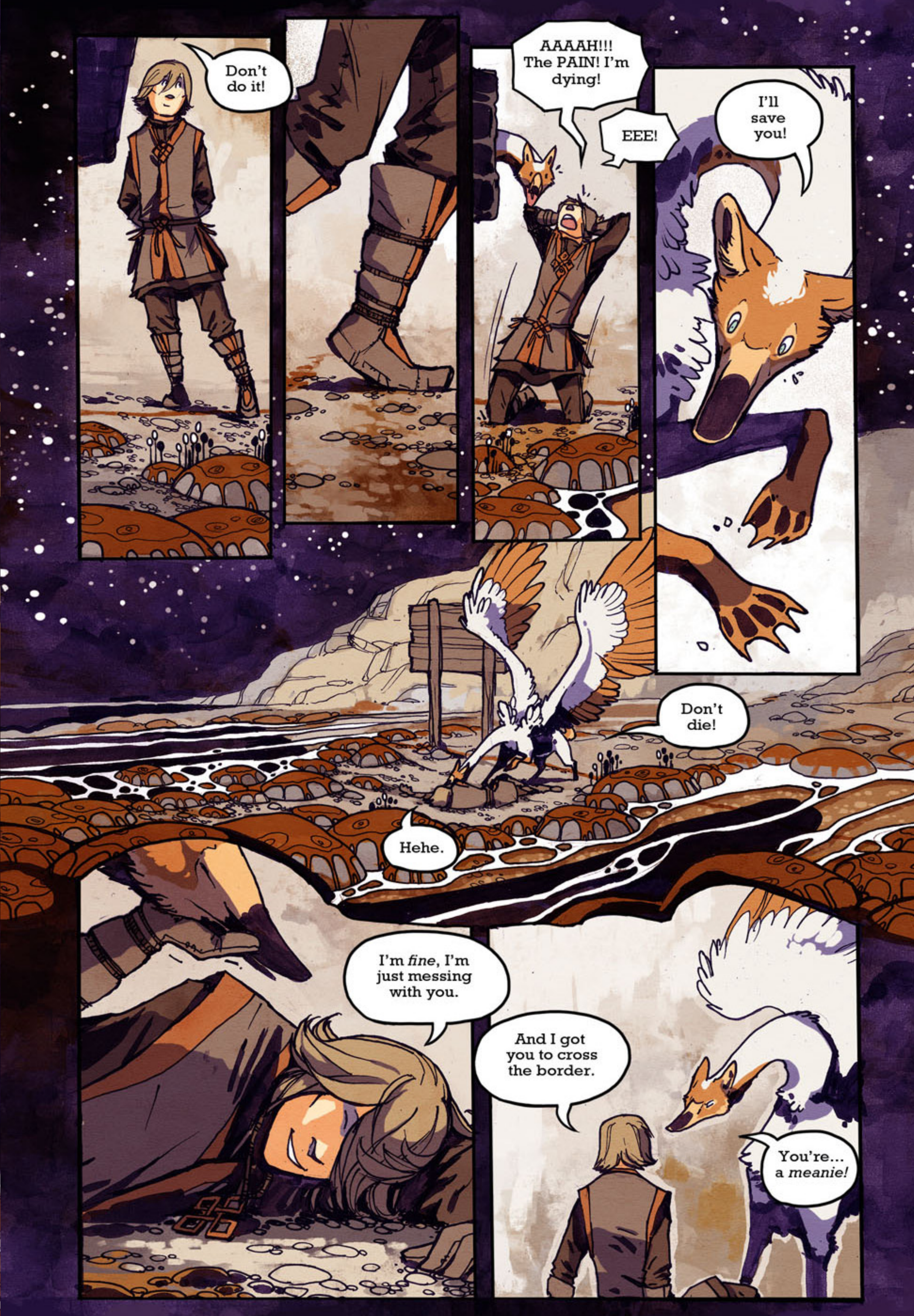

But you *float!* That's pretty cool, huh?
No it's not! It's *lame!* That's the opposite of cool!
Alright, but you're *big* again! That's got to count for something!
Yeah...
...and I guess it's my turn to give you a ride again.
Hop on board?
No thanks, not until I absolutely have to.
I'm sure you get why.
Yes, but I think you'll end up in the water sooner or later anyway.

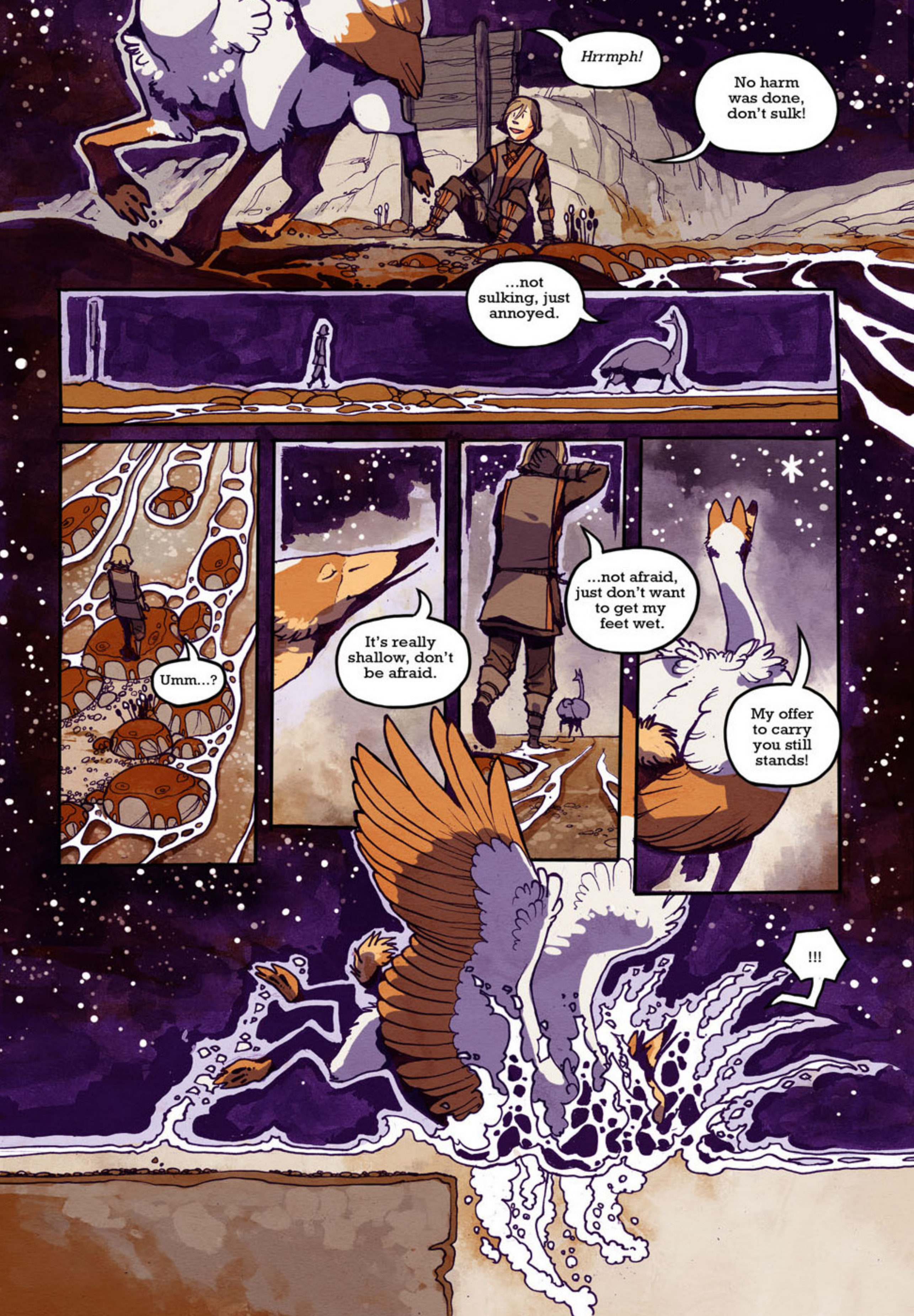

Shoot! It's the vomit-bird! Cover me!
False alarm, looks like it finally learned its lesson.
Aww, I wish it had at least stopped by. It's so eerily lonely here.
I don't think the fox is going to show up this time either.
Well, *good.*

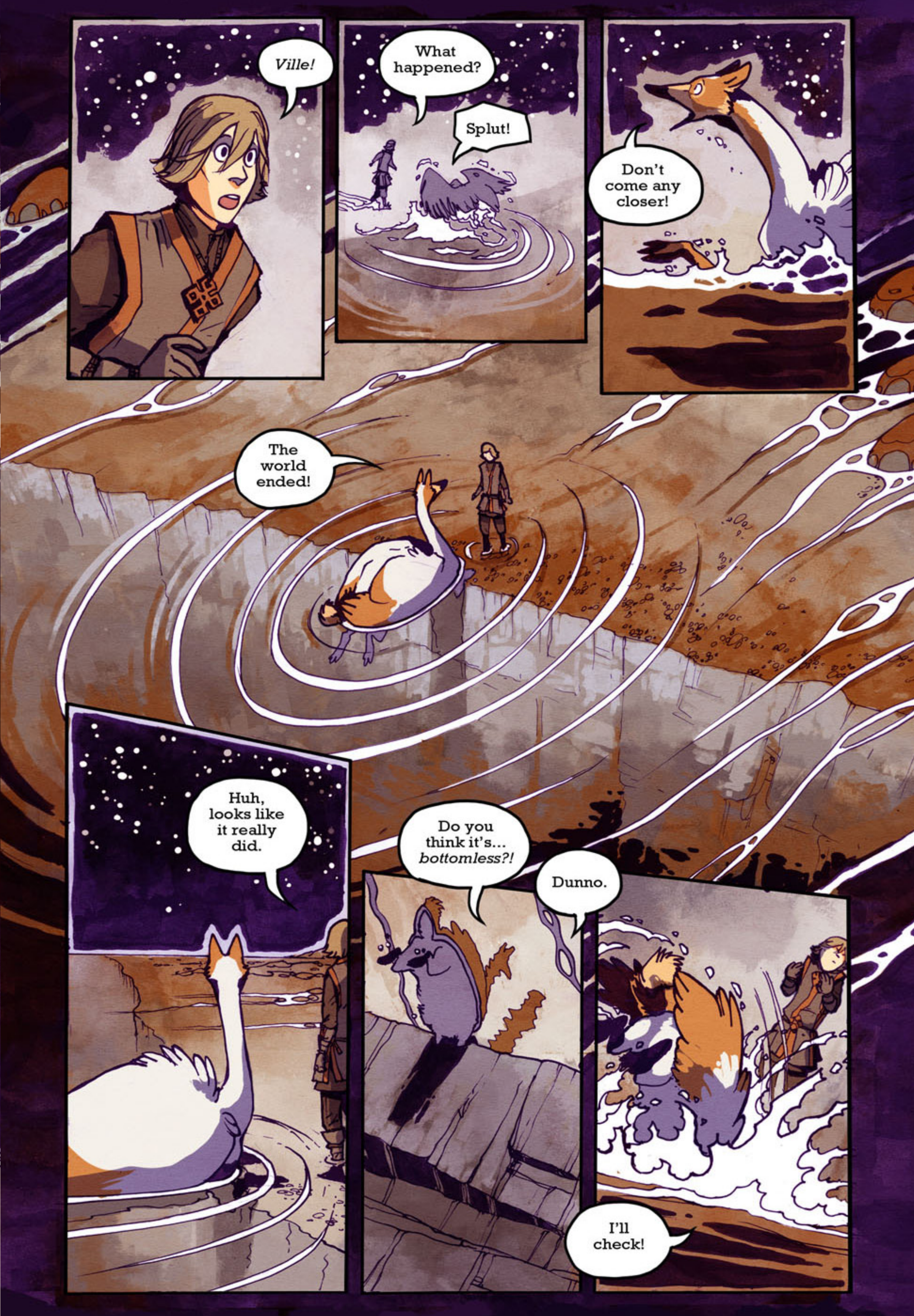

Soo...I'm not enough company for you? You're really starting to need other people, huh?
No, not "starting to"...
...I always like having other people around, too, because people are *fun.*
?
Sniff Sniff
EEE!!!
That's *BLOOD!*

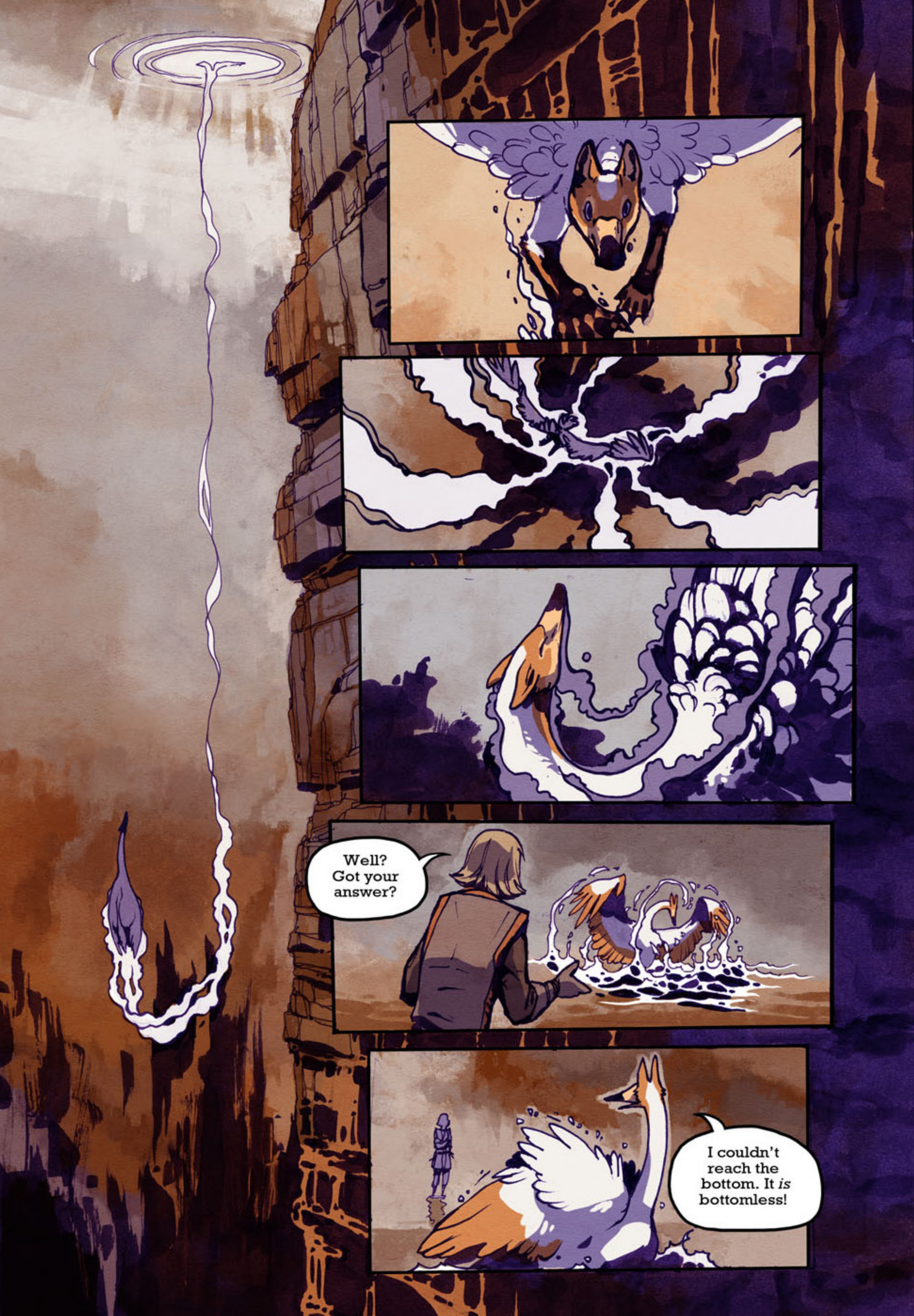

Ew! Ew! Eeeew!!!
Really?
Hm, I guess it is.
Oooh! I think I know where we are.
W-where?
Come.

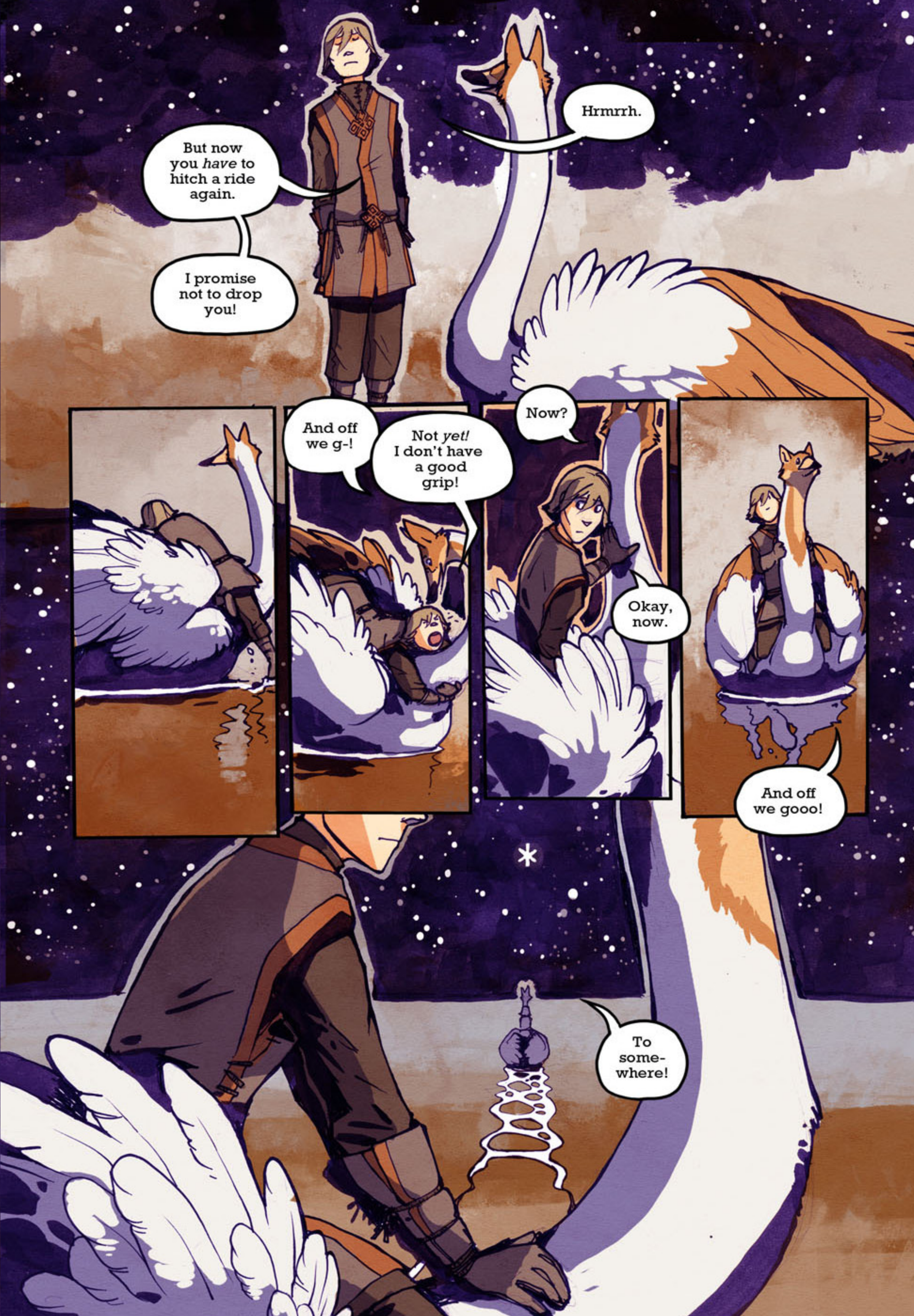

TUONELA
Kindly keep out!
...
I was right.
So where are we?
Oh...no! We can't go *there!*
We kind of have to.
Unless we stop following the North Star.
B-but we might *die!*
Nah, I doubt it.
TUONELA

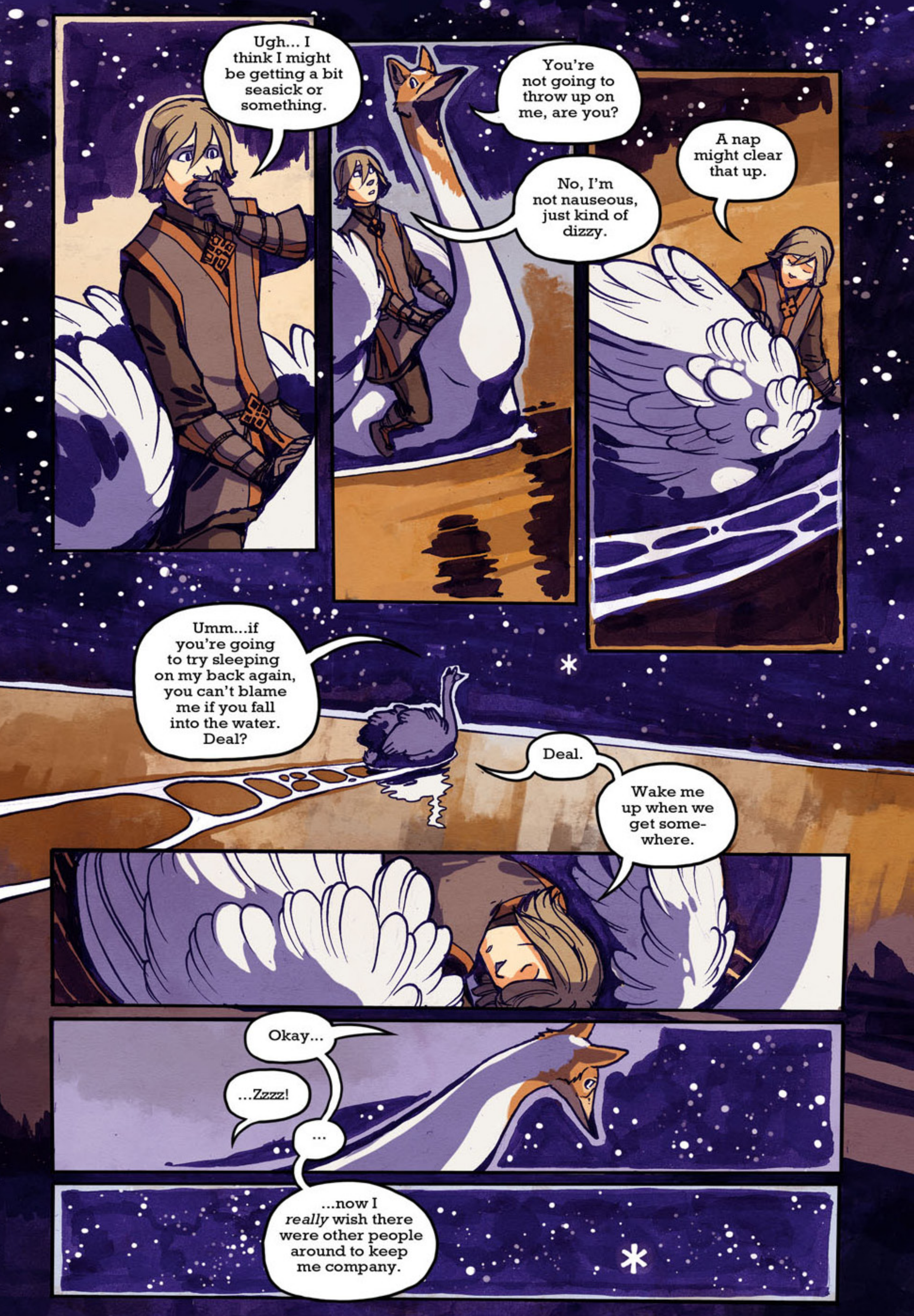

Don't do it!
AAAAH!!! The PAIN! I'm dying!
EEE!
I'll save you!
Don't die!
Hehe.
I'm *fine*, I'm just messing with you.
And I got you to cross the border.
You're... a *meanie!*

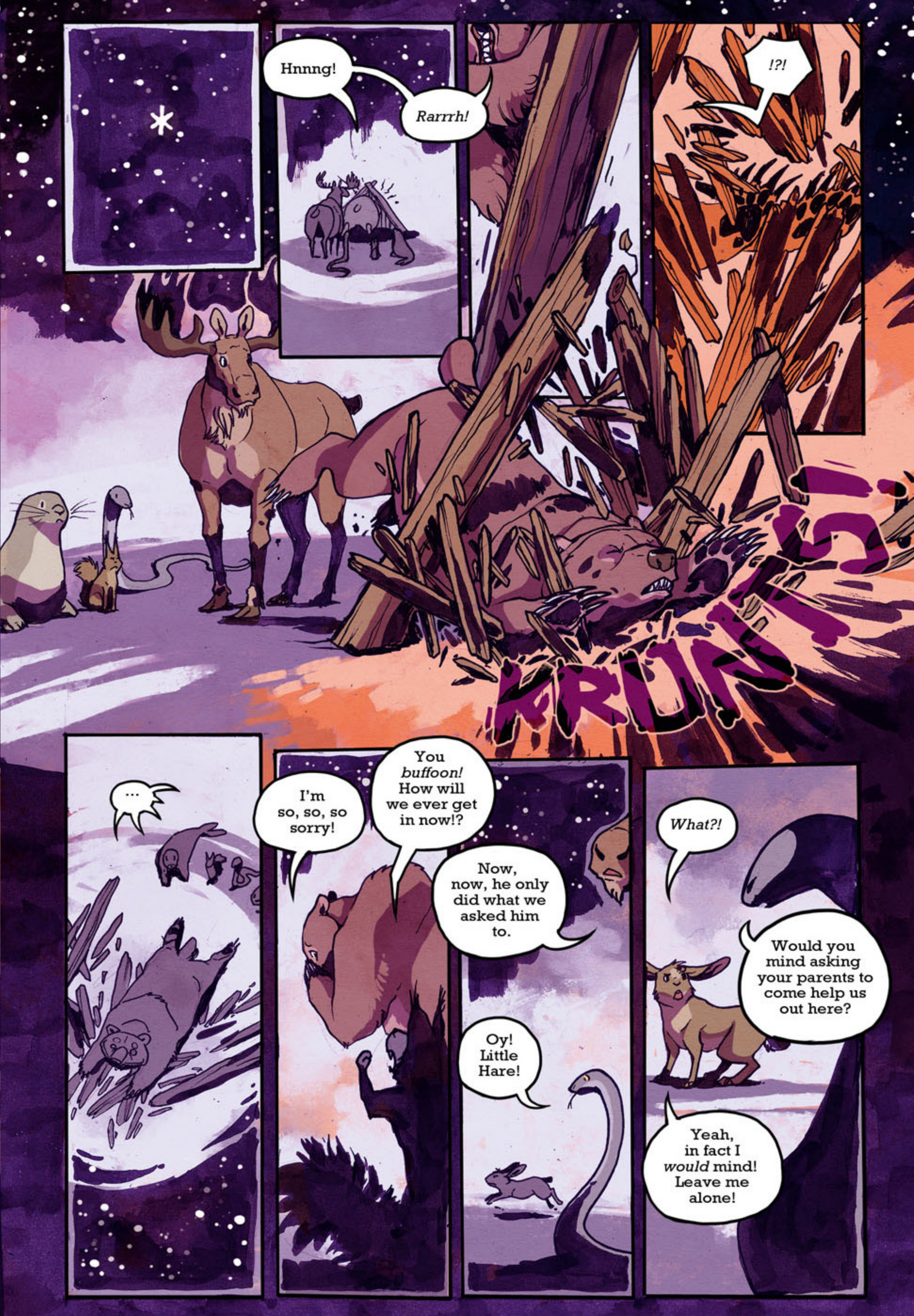

Hrrmph!
No harm was done, don't sulk!
...not sulking, just annoyed.
Umm...?
It's really shallow, don't be afraid.
...not afraid, just don't want to get my feet wet.
My offer to carry you still stands!
!!!

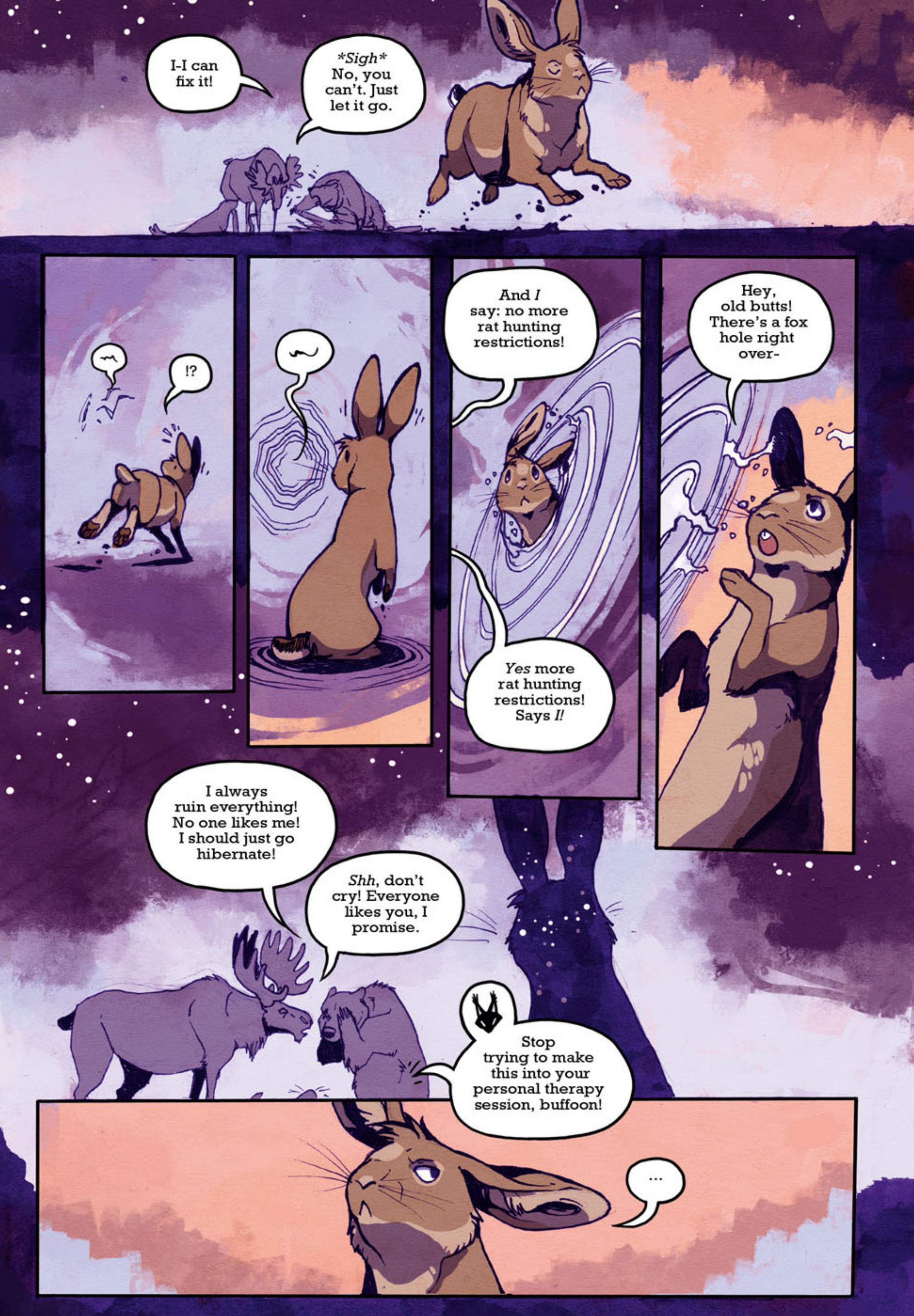

Ville!
What happened?
Splut!
Don't come any closer!
The world ended!
Huh, looks like it really did.
Do you think it's... *bottomless?!*
Dunno.
I'll check!

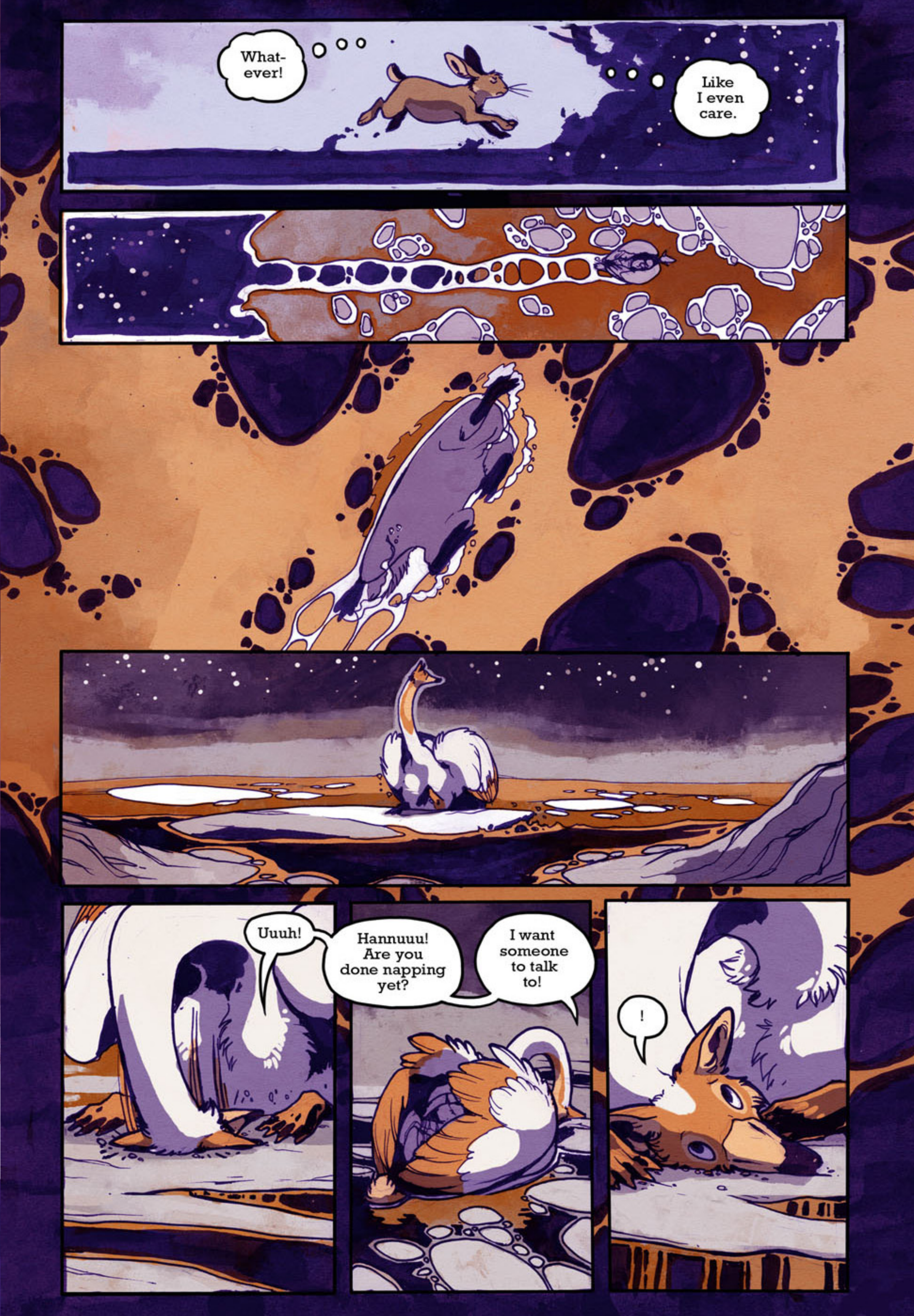

Well? Got your answer?
I couldn't reach the bottom. It *is* bottomless!

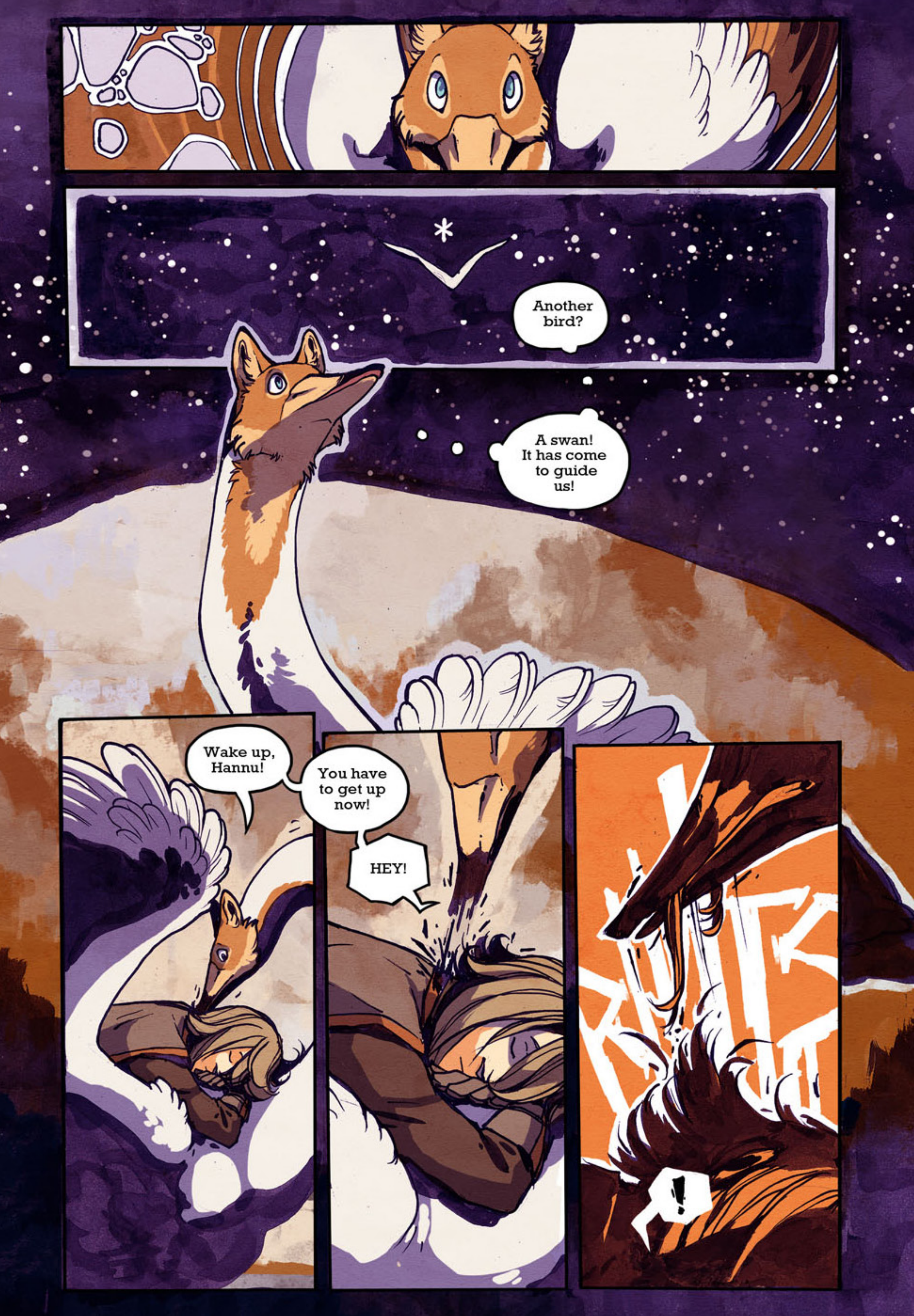

Hrmrrh.
But now you *have* to hitch a ride again.
I promise not to drop you!
And off we g-!
Not *yet!* I don't have a good grip!
Now?
Okay, now.
And off we gooo!
To somewhere!

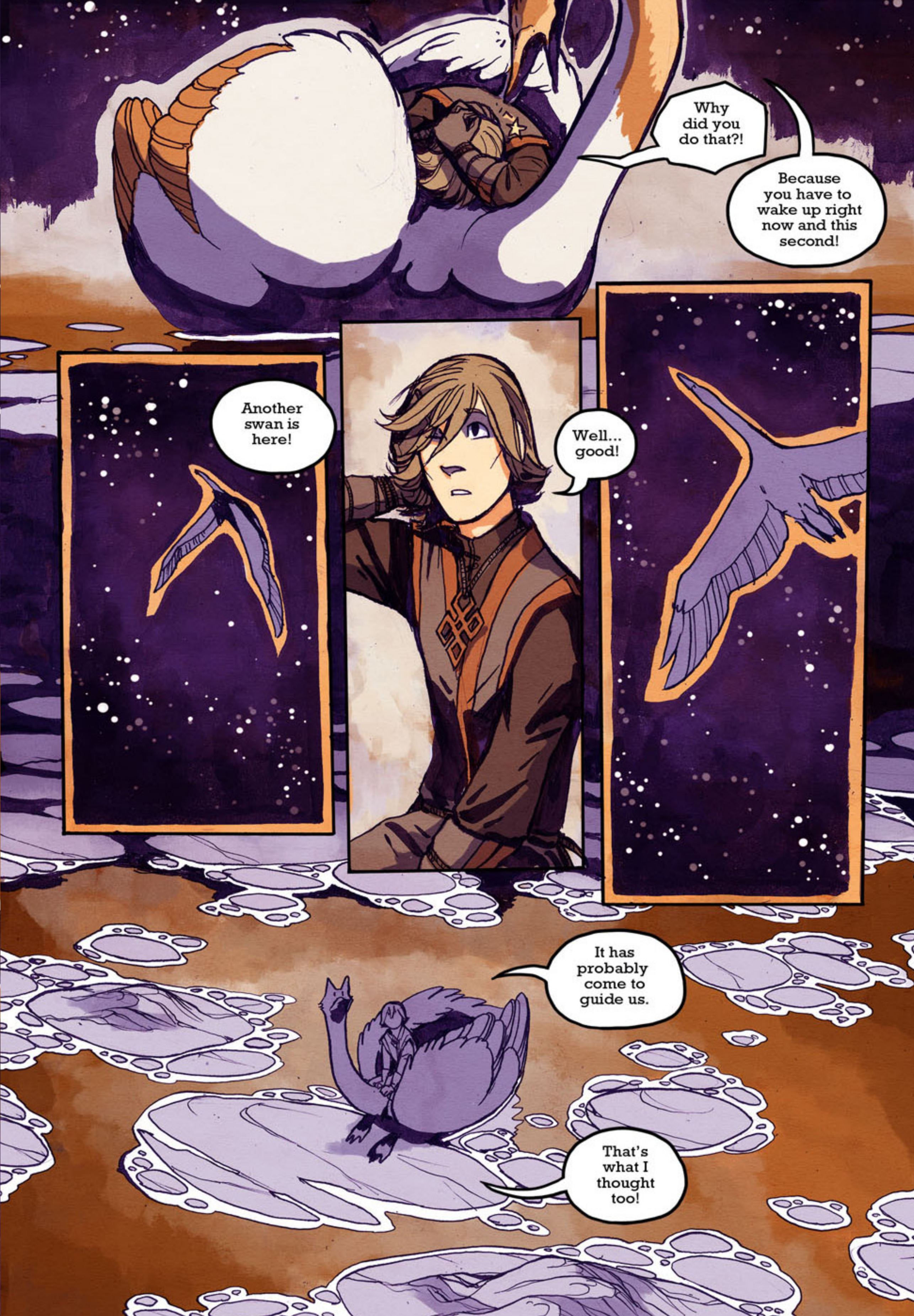

Ugh... I think I might be getting a bit seasick or something.
You're not going to throw up on me, are you?
No, I'm not nauseous, just kind of dizzy.
A nap might clear that up.
Umm...if you're going to try sleeping on my back again, you can't blame me if you fall into the water. Deal?
Deal.
Wake me up when we get somewhere.
Okay...
...Zzzz!
...
...now I *really* wish there were other people around to keep me company.

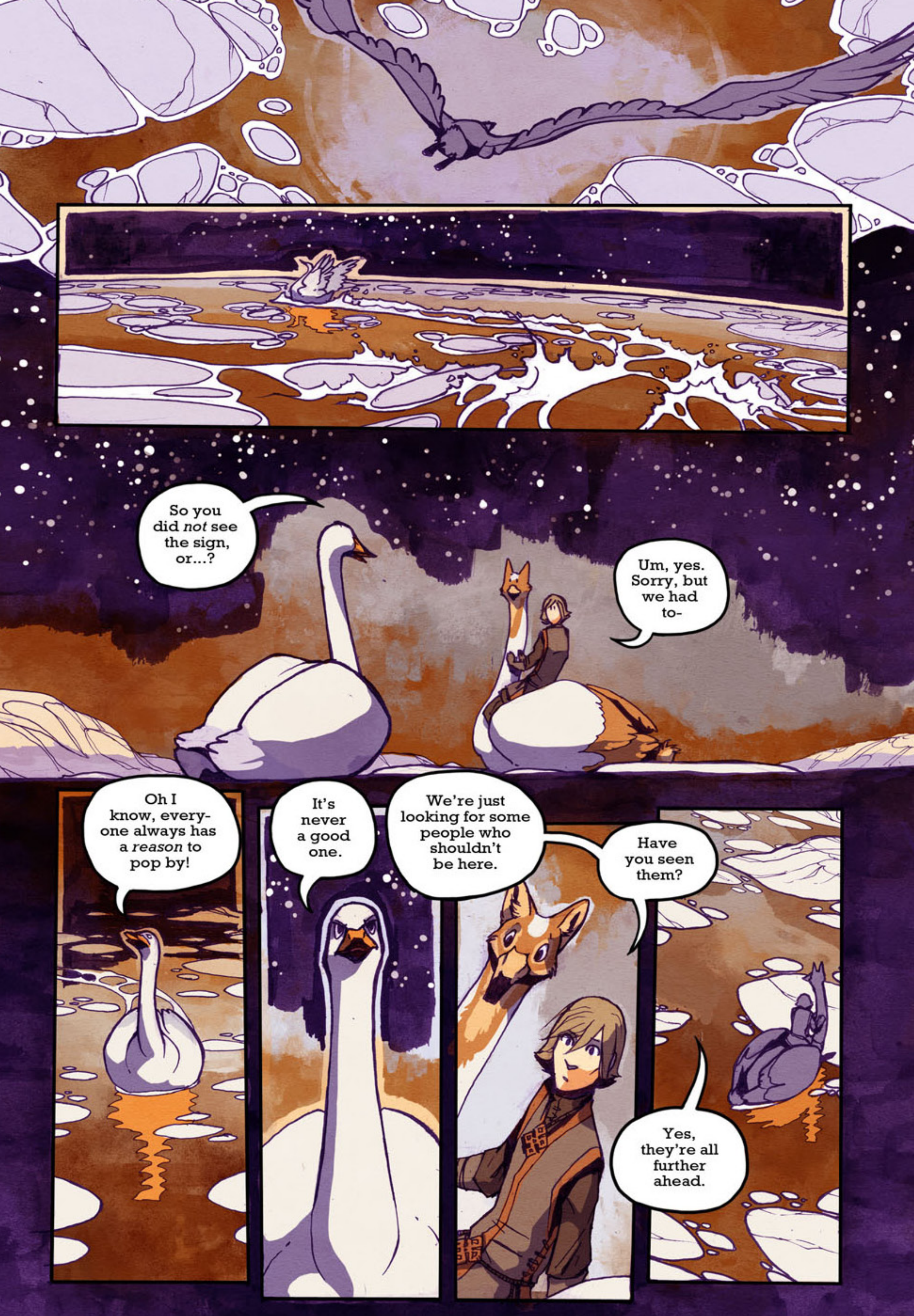

Hnnng!
Rarrrh!
!?!
KRUNS
...
I'm so, so, so sorry!
You *buffoon!* How will we ever get in now!?
Now, now, he only did what we asked him to.
Oy! Little Hare!
What?!
Would you mind asking your parents to come help us out here?
Yeah, in fact I *would* mind! Leave me alone!

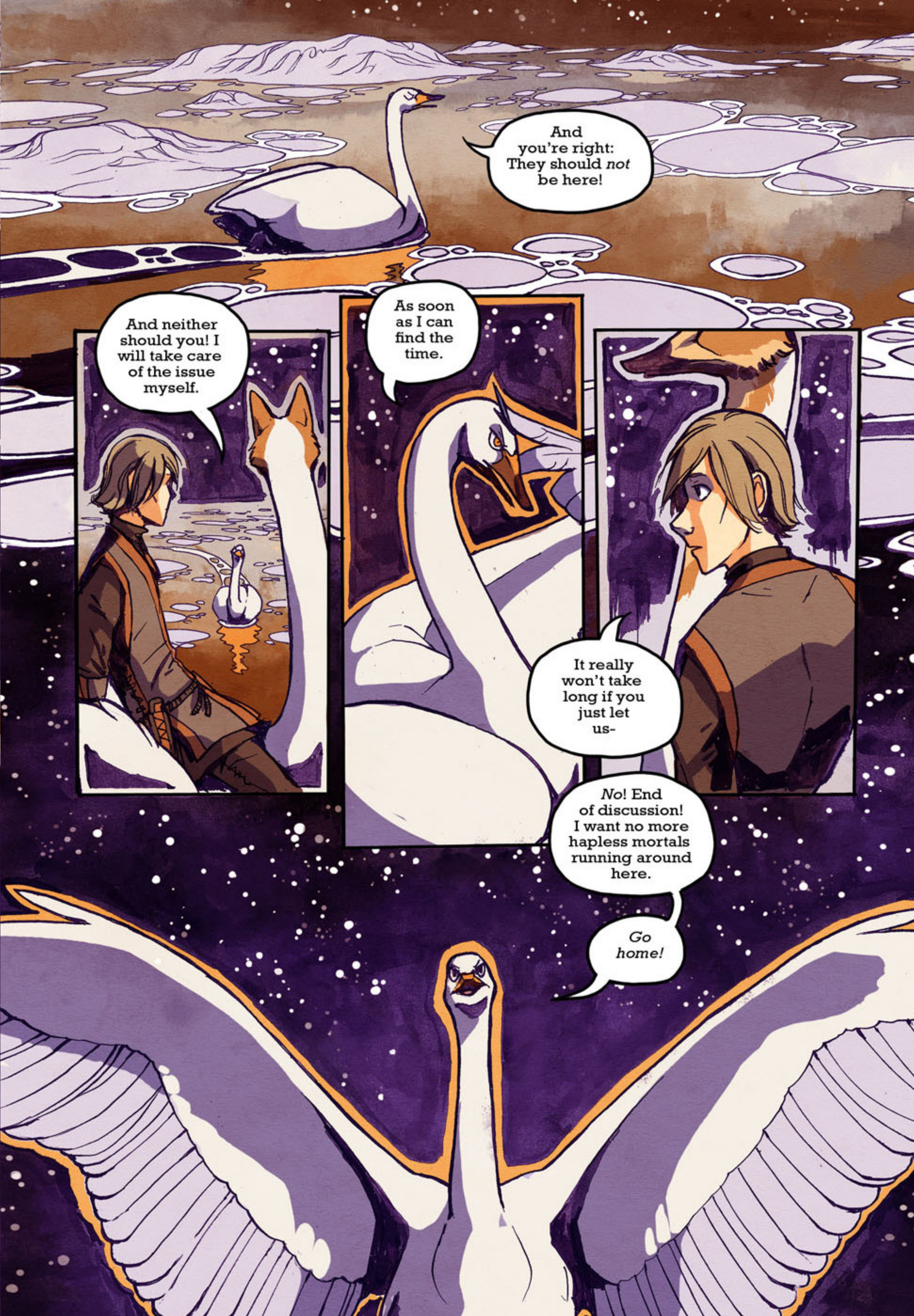

I-I can fix it!
Sigh No, you can't. Just let it go.
!?
And *I* say: no more rat hunting restrictions!
Yes more rat hunting restrictions! Says *I!*
Hey, old butts! There's a fox hole right over-
I always ruin everything! No one likes me! I should just go hibernate!
Shh, don't cry! Everyone likes you, I promise.
Stop trying to make this into your personal therapy session, buffoon!
...

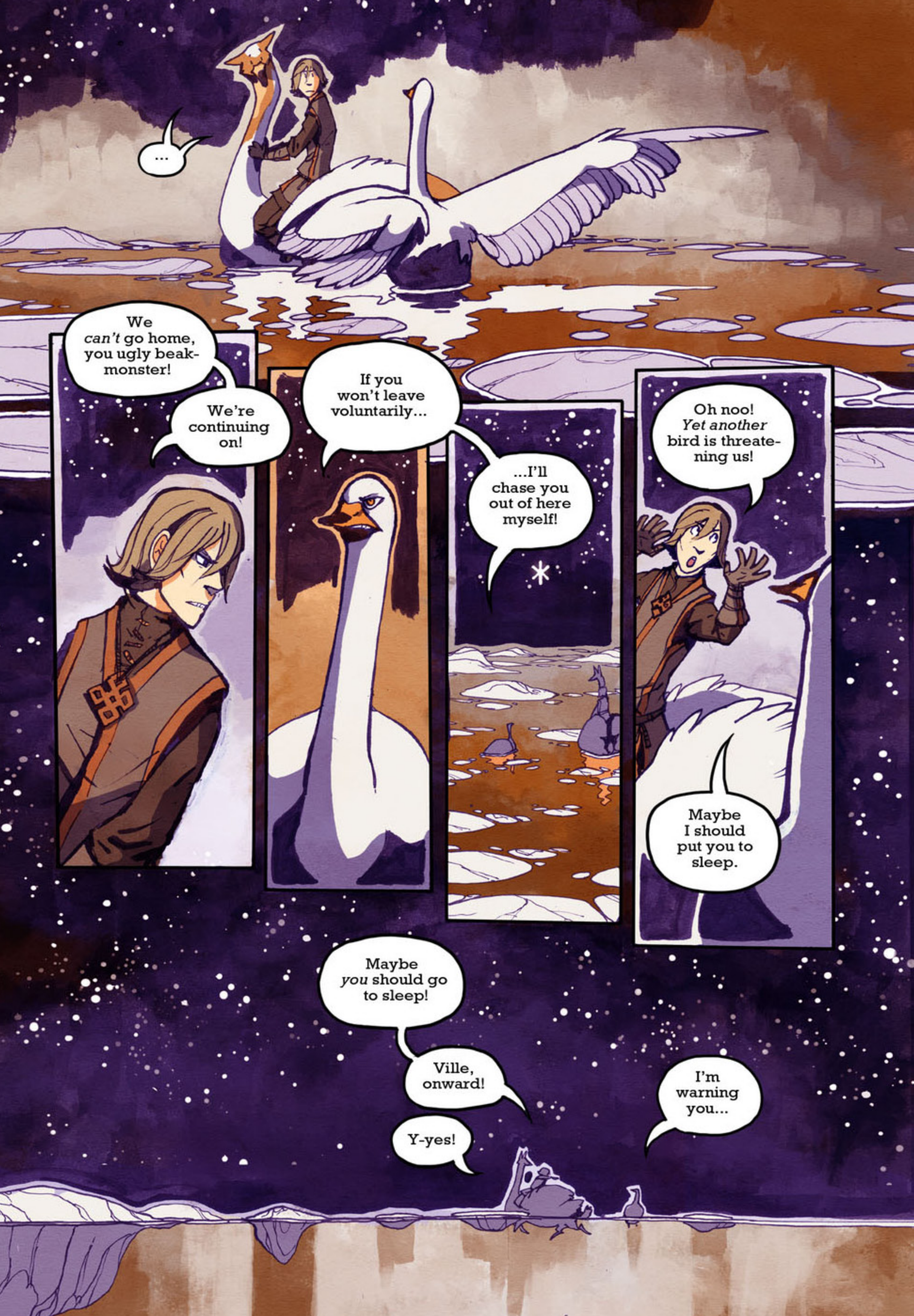

What-ever!
Like I even care.
Uuuh!
Hannuuu! Are you done napping yet?
I want someone to talk to!
!

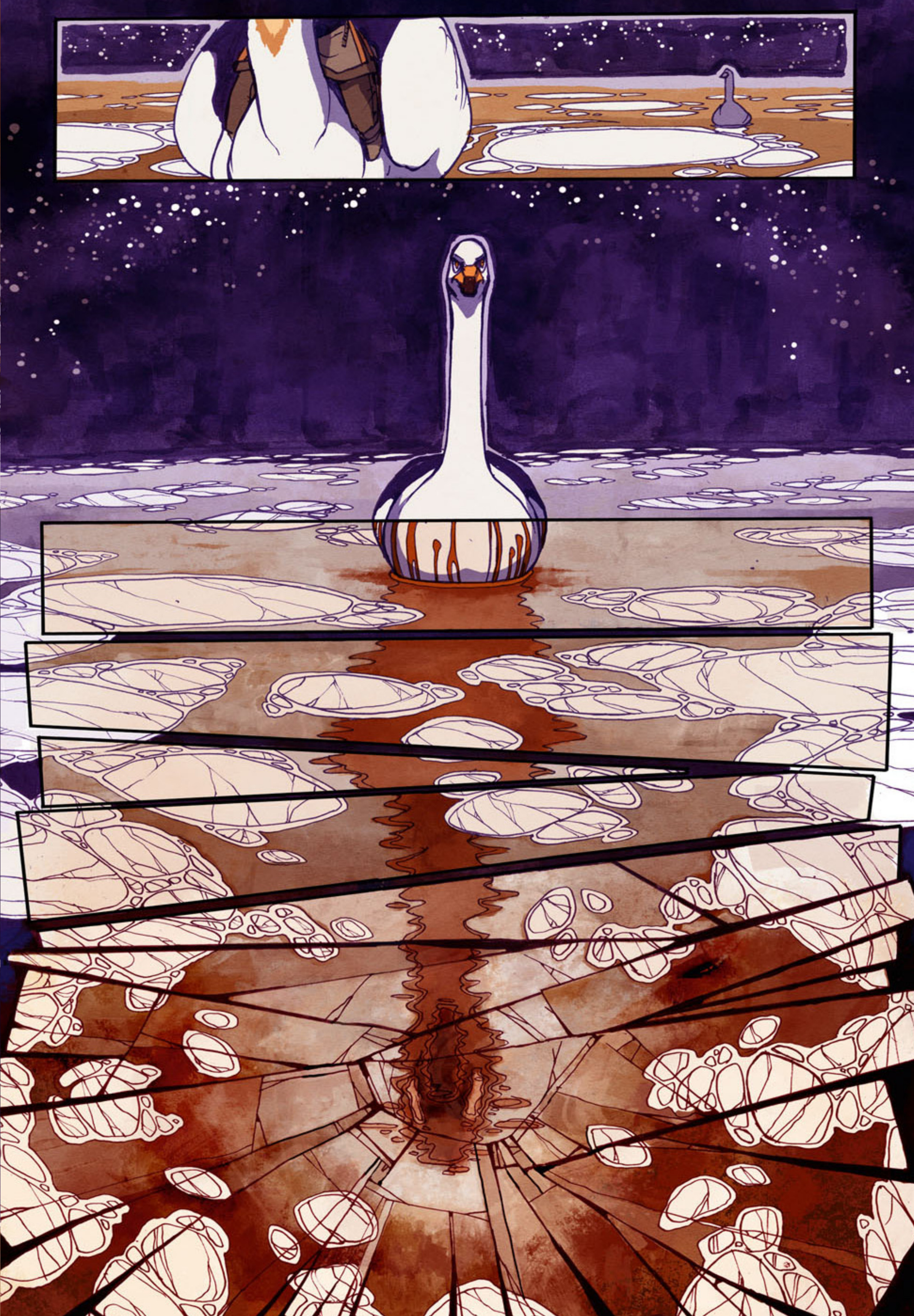

Another bird?
A swan! It has come to guide us!
Wake up, Hannu!
You have to get up now!
HEY!
!

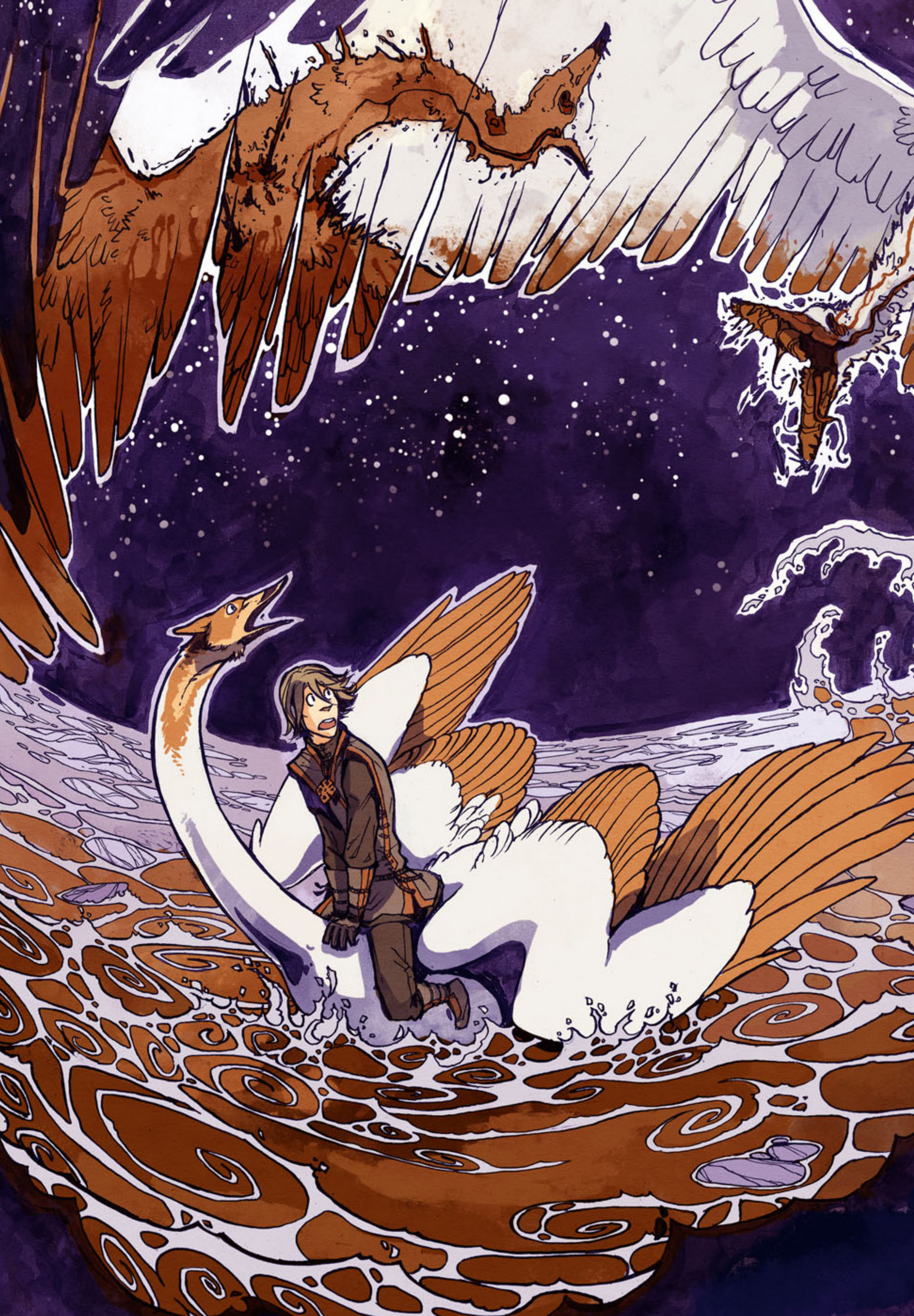

Why did you do that?!
Because you have to wake up right now and this second!
Another swan is here!
Well... good!
It has probably come to guide us.
That's what I thought too!

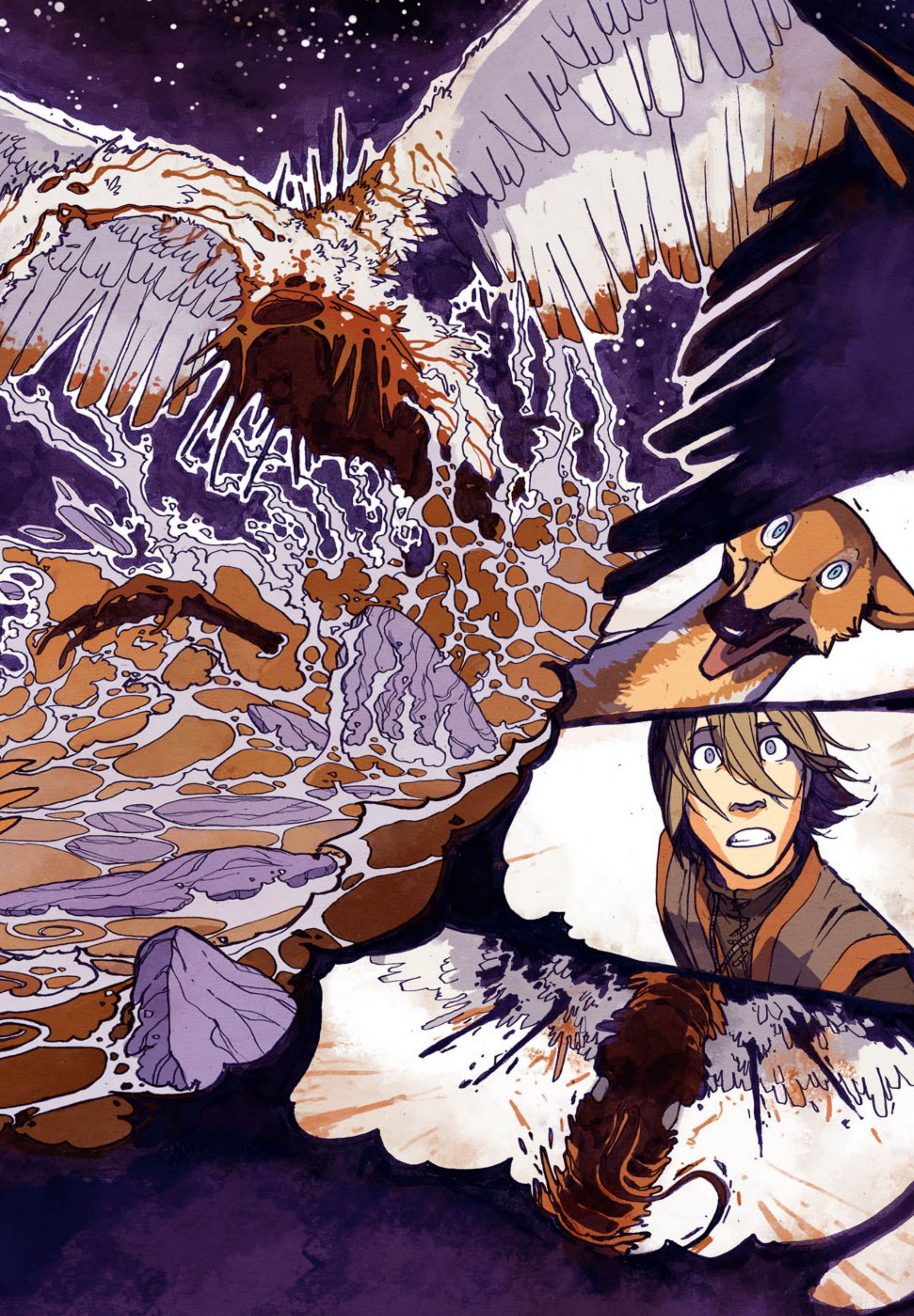

So you did *not* see the sign, or...?
Um, yes. Sorry, but we had to-
Oh I know, everyone always has a *reason* to pop by!
It's never a good one.
We're just looking for some people who shouldn't be here.
Have you seen them?
Yes, they're all further ahead.

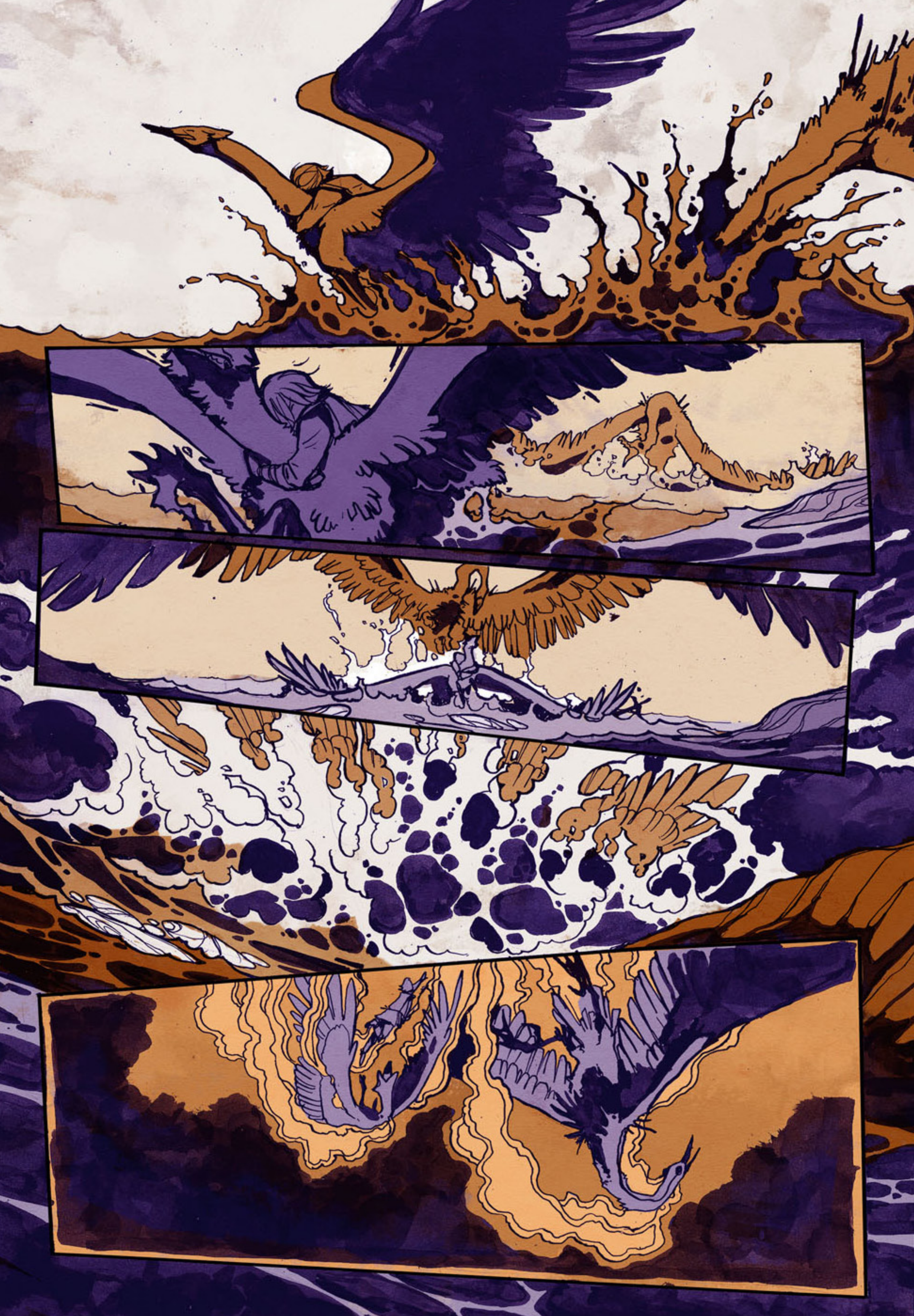

And you're right: They should *not* be here!
And neither should you! I will take care of the issue myself.
As soon as I can find the time.
It really won't take long if you just let us-
No! End of discussion! I want no more hapless mortals running around here.
Go home!

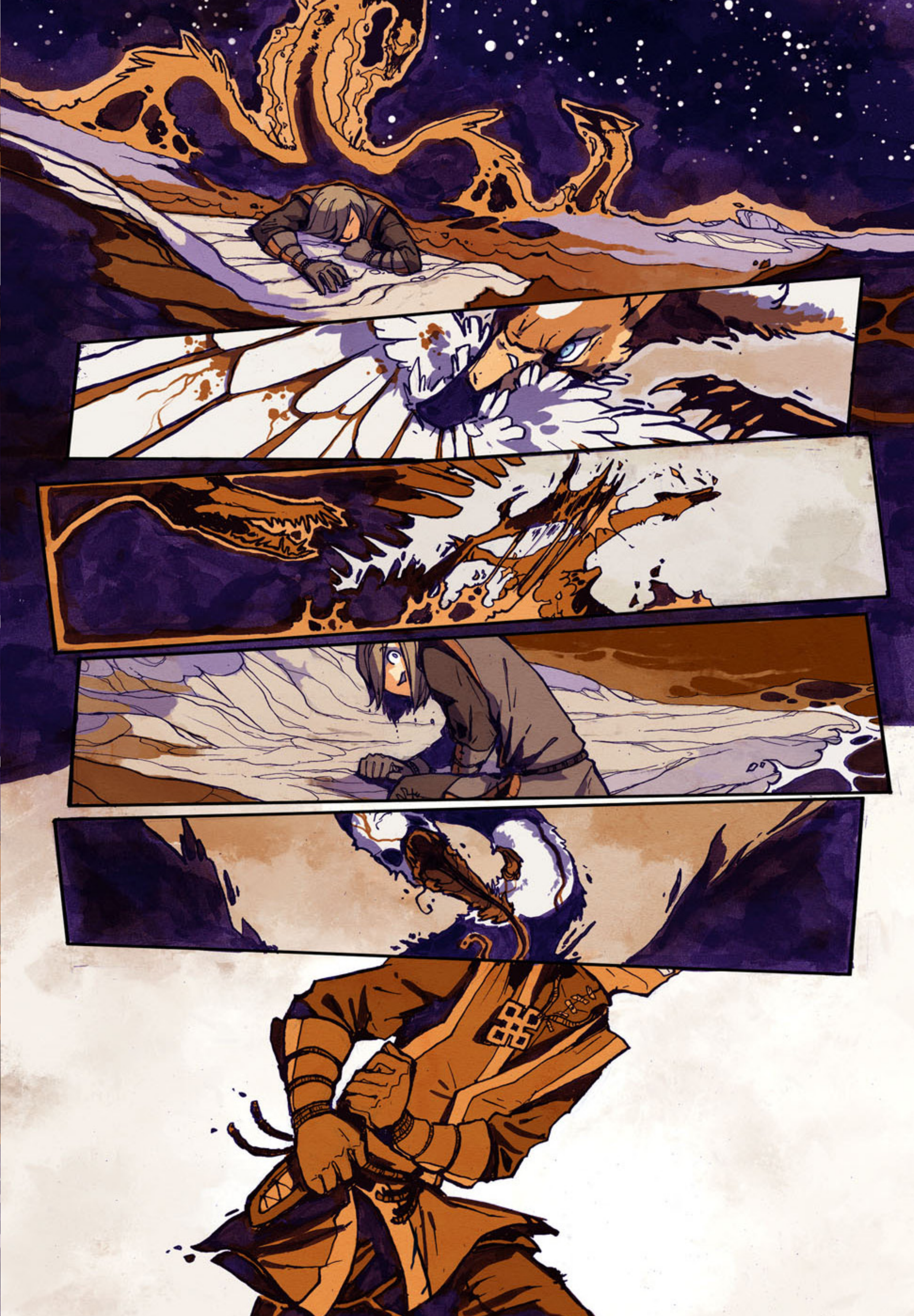

...
We *can't* go home, you ugly beak-monster!
We're continuing on!
If you won't leave voluntarily...
...I'll chase you out of here myself!
Oh noo! *Yet another* bird is threatening us!
Maybe I should put you to sleep.
Maybe *you* should go to sleep!
Ville, onward!
Y-yes!
I'm warning you...

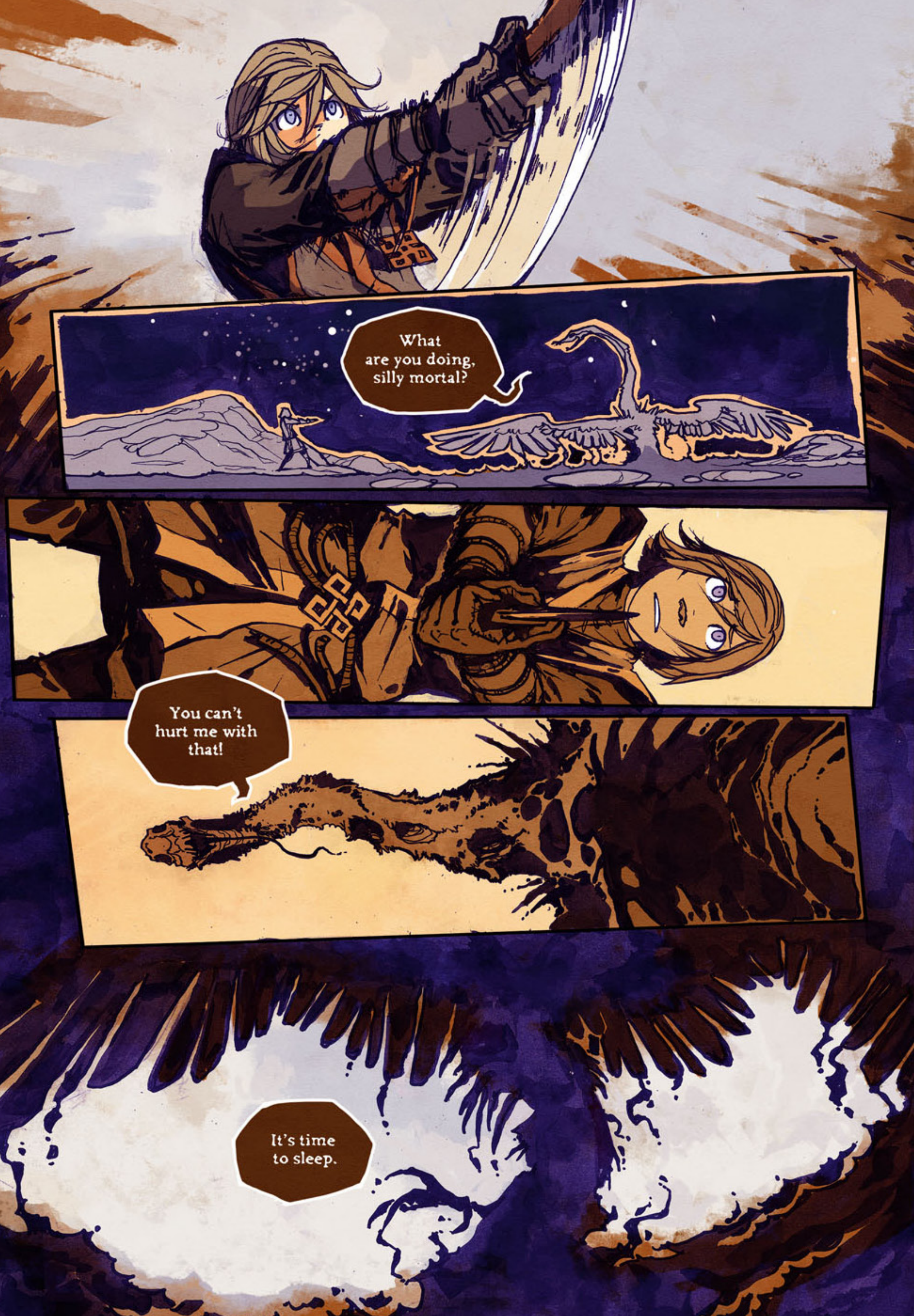


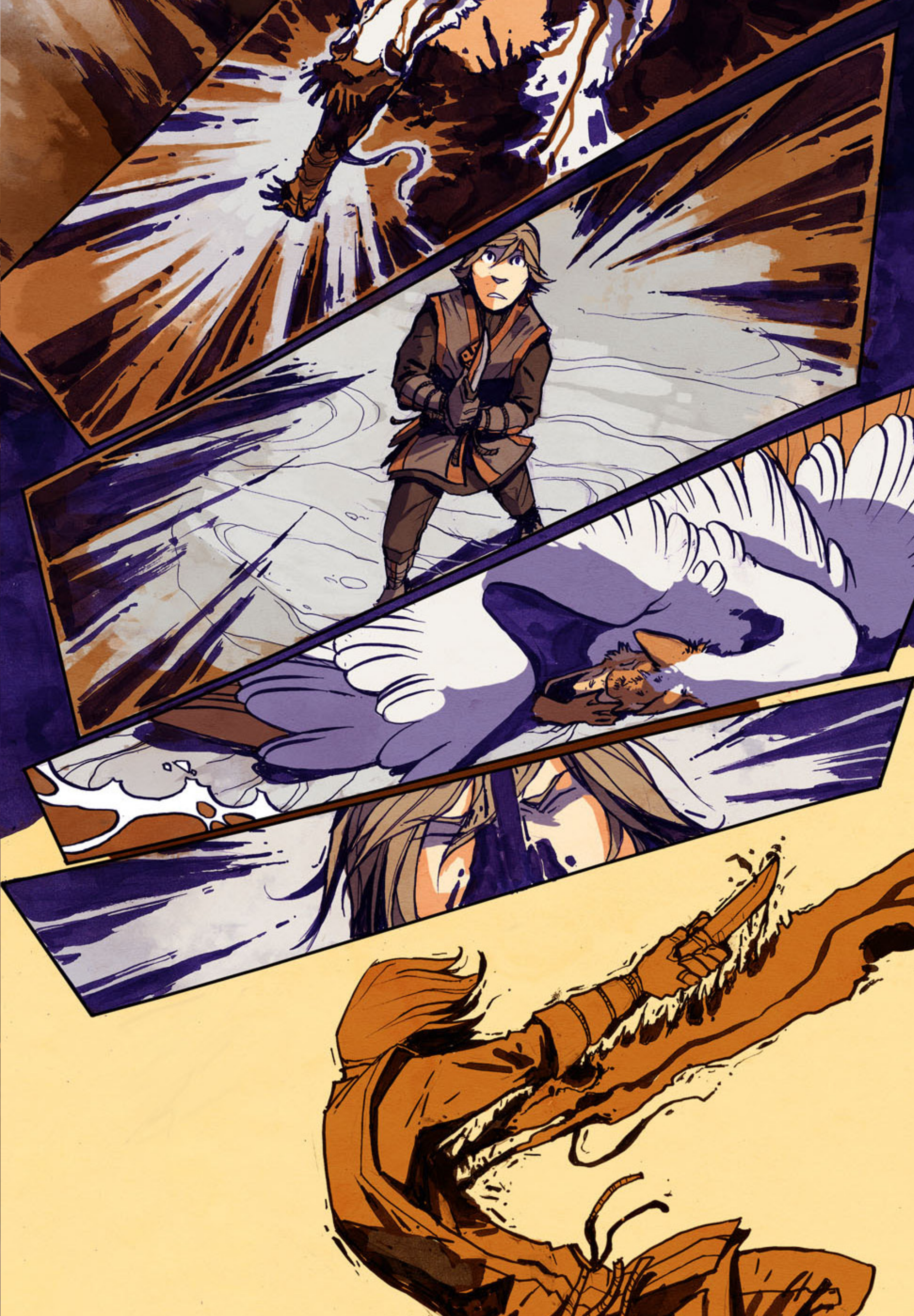


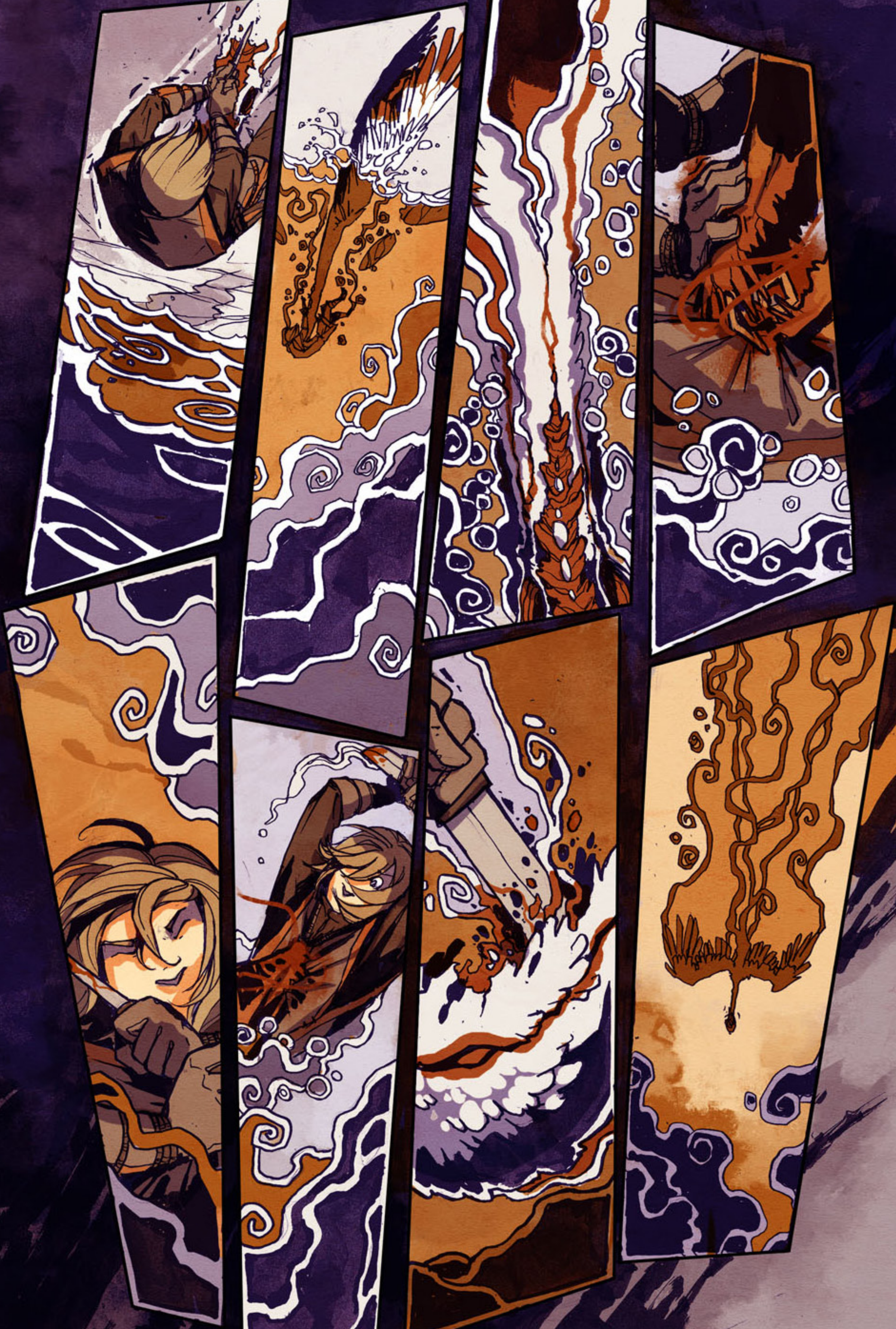


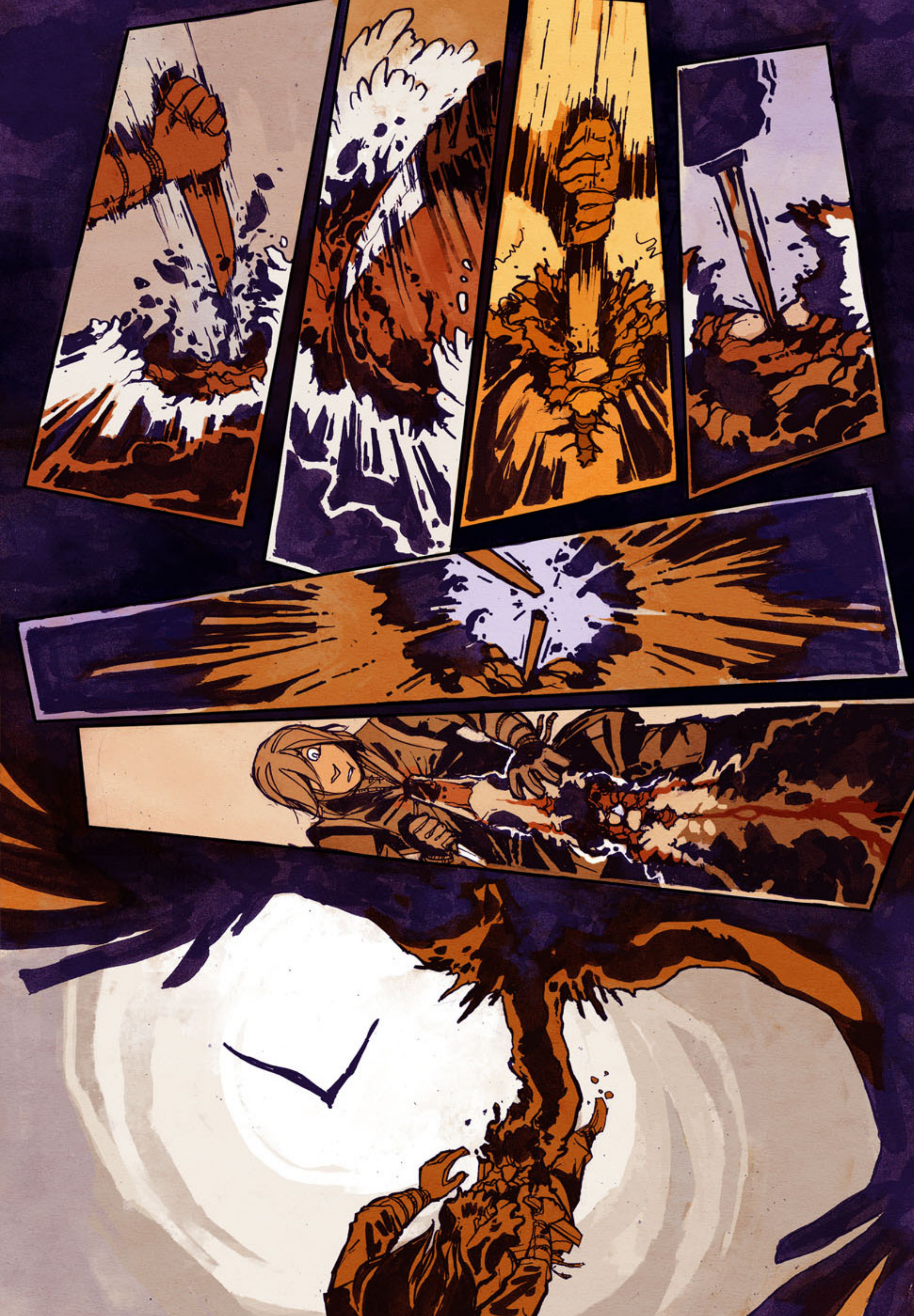


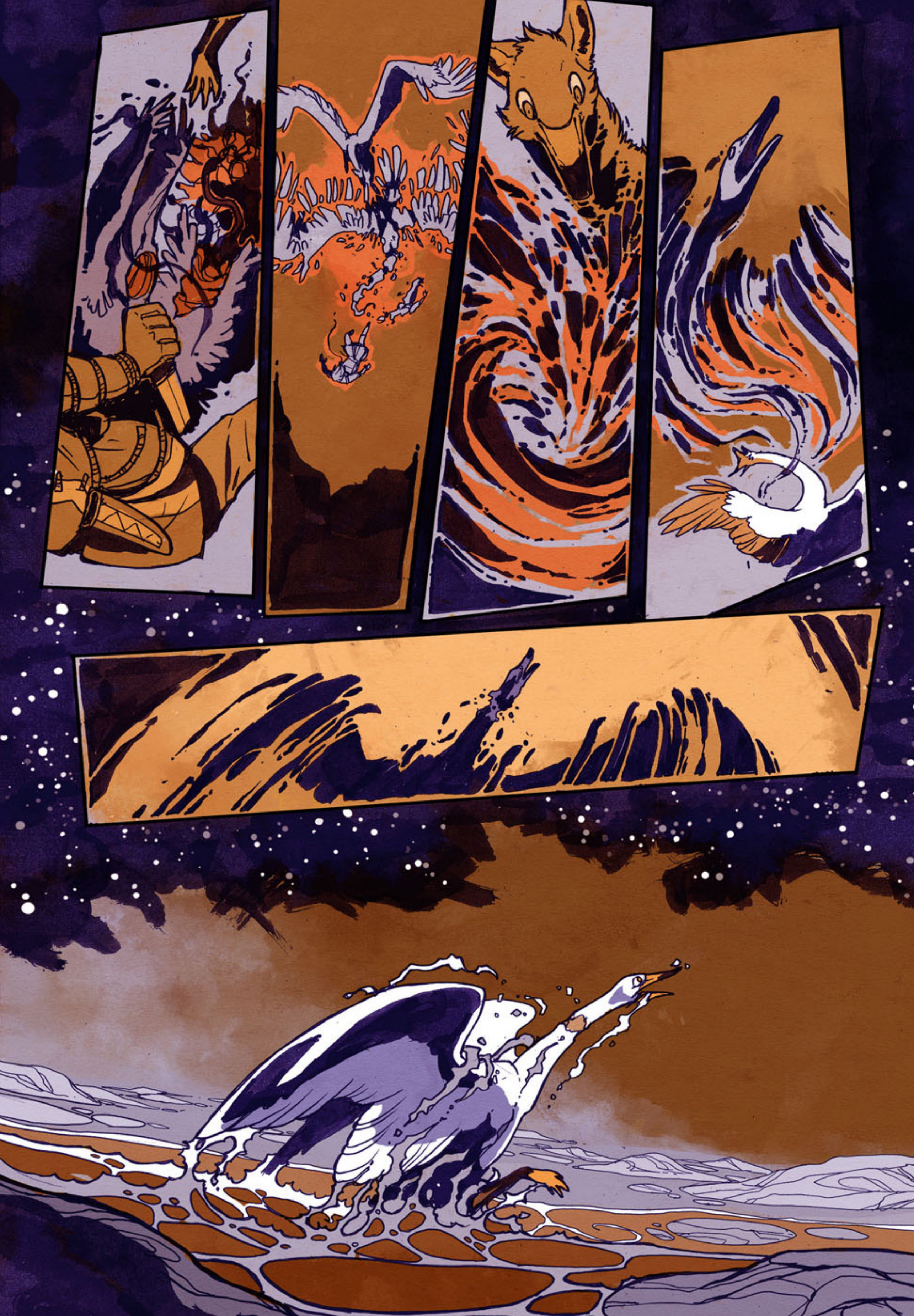


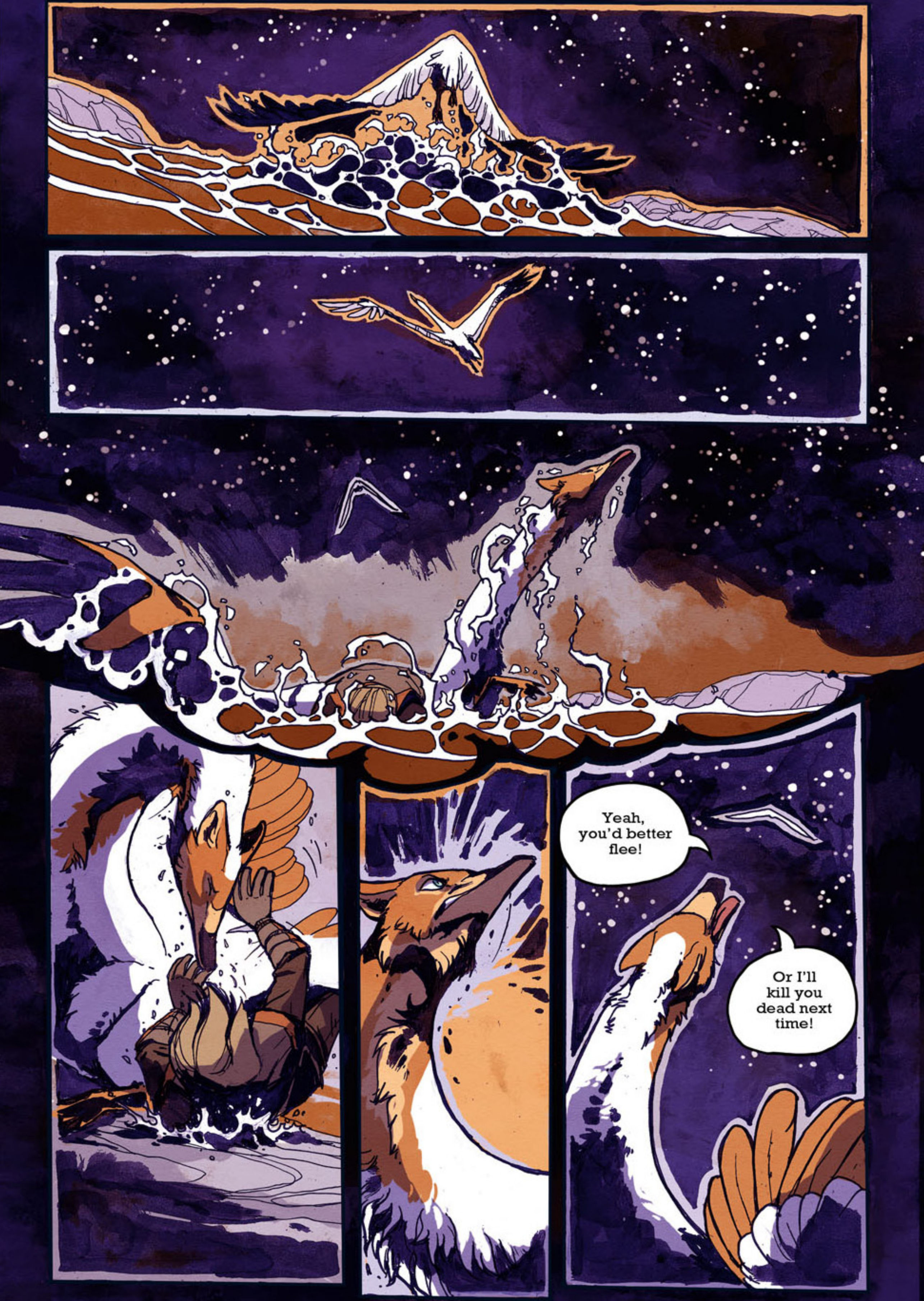

What are you doing, silly mortal?
You can't hurt me with that!
It's time to sleep.

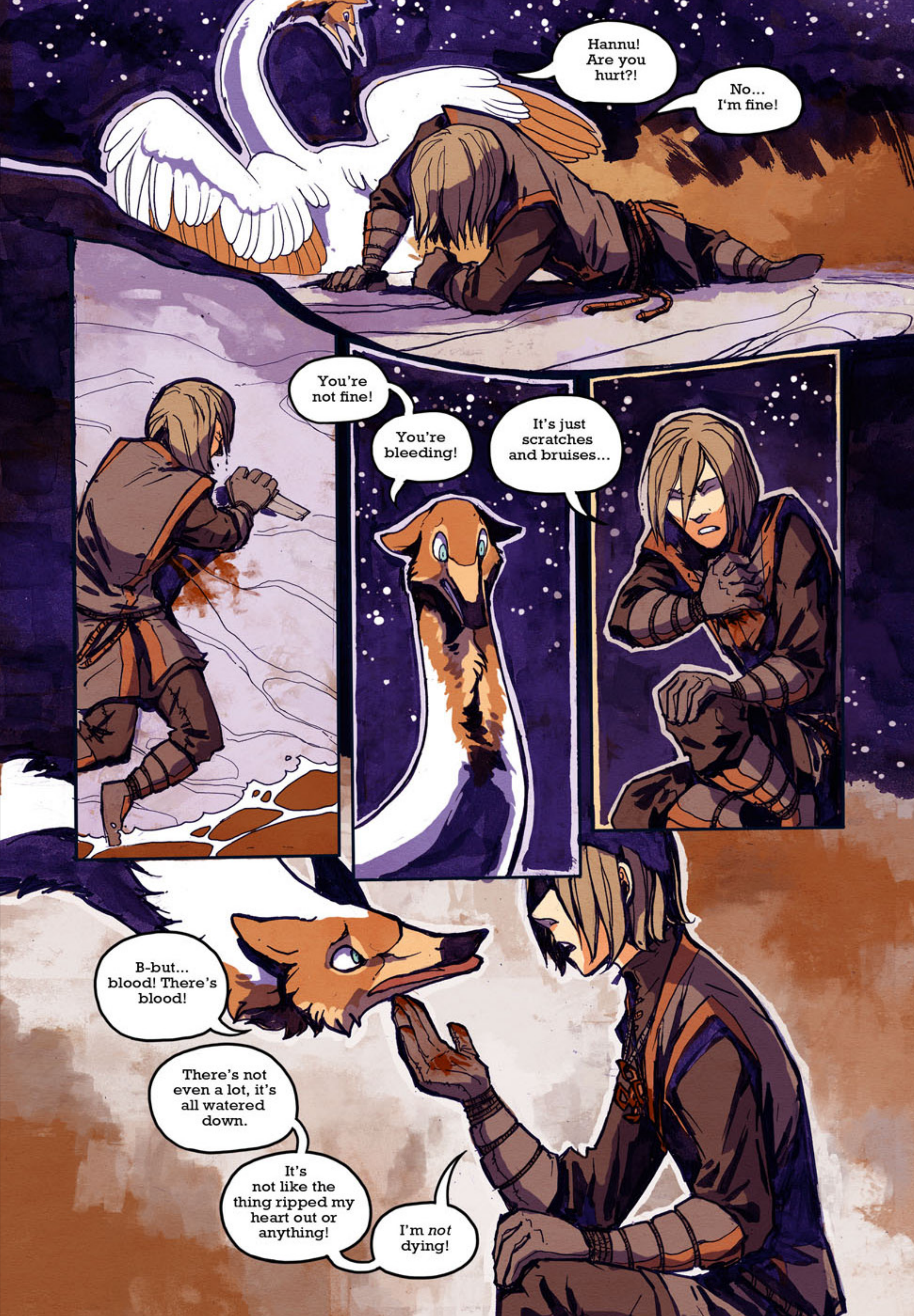


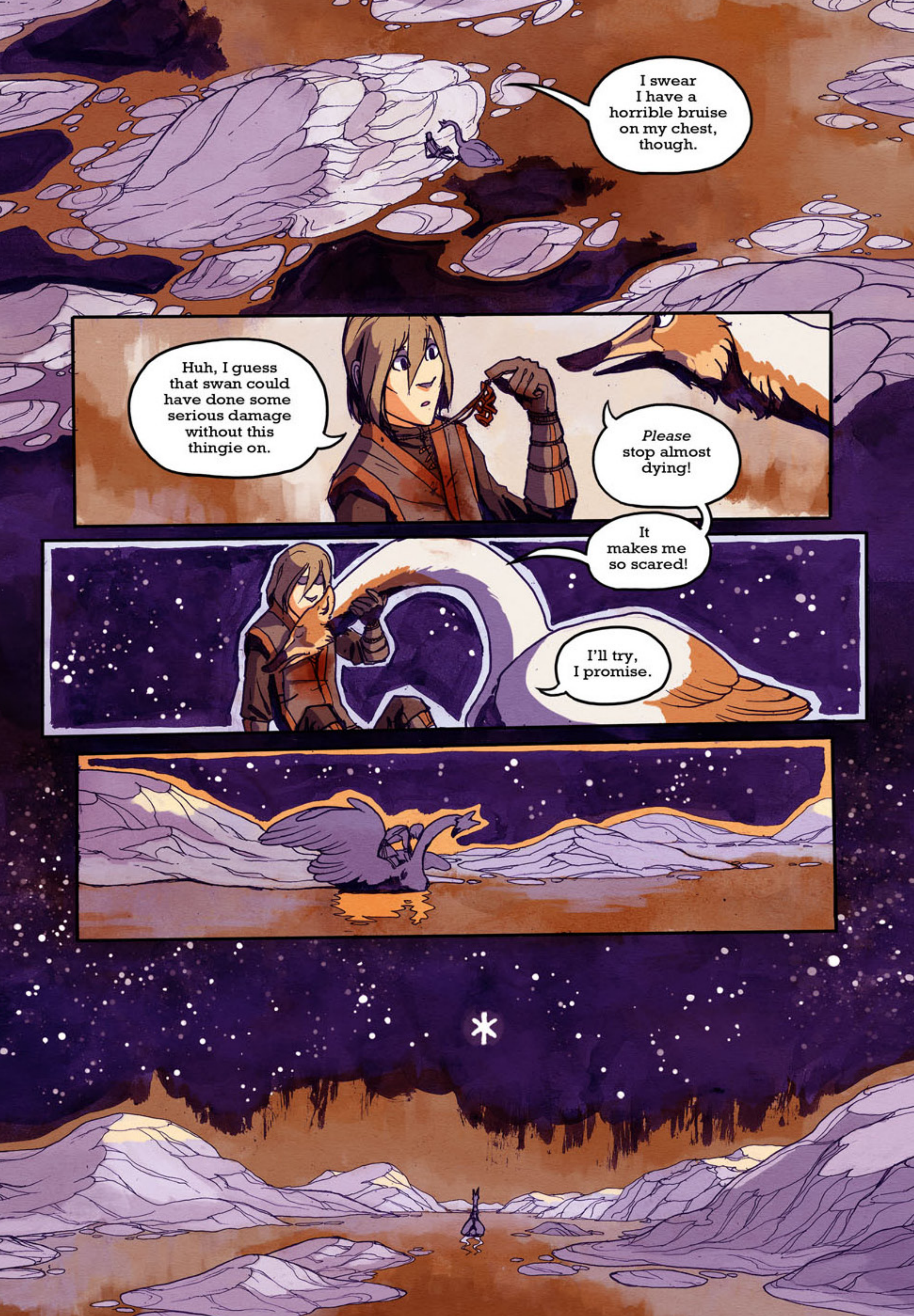


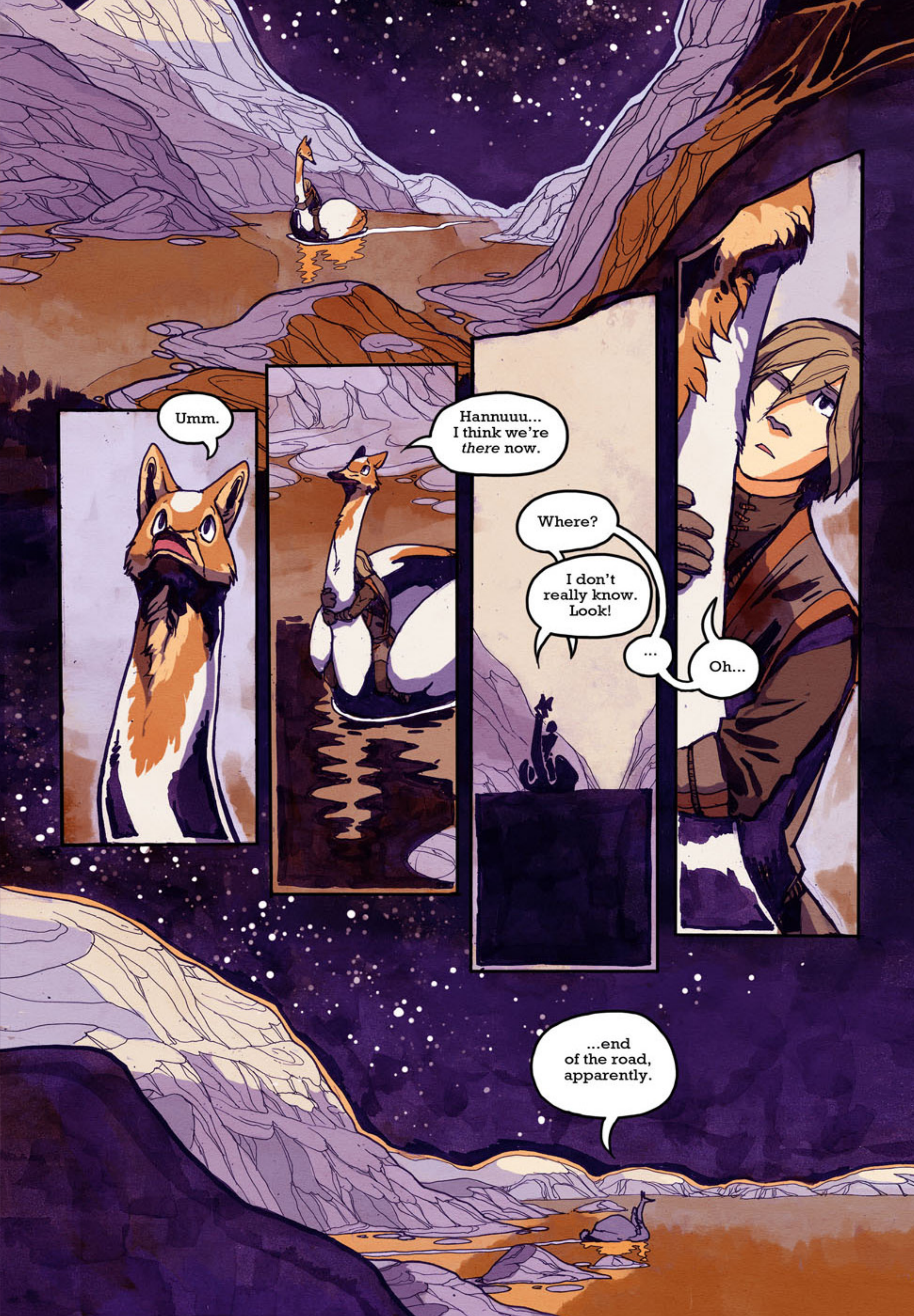


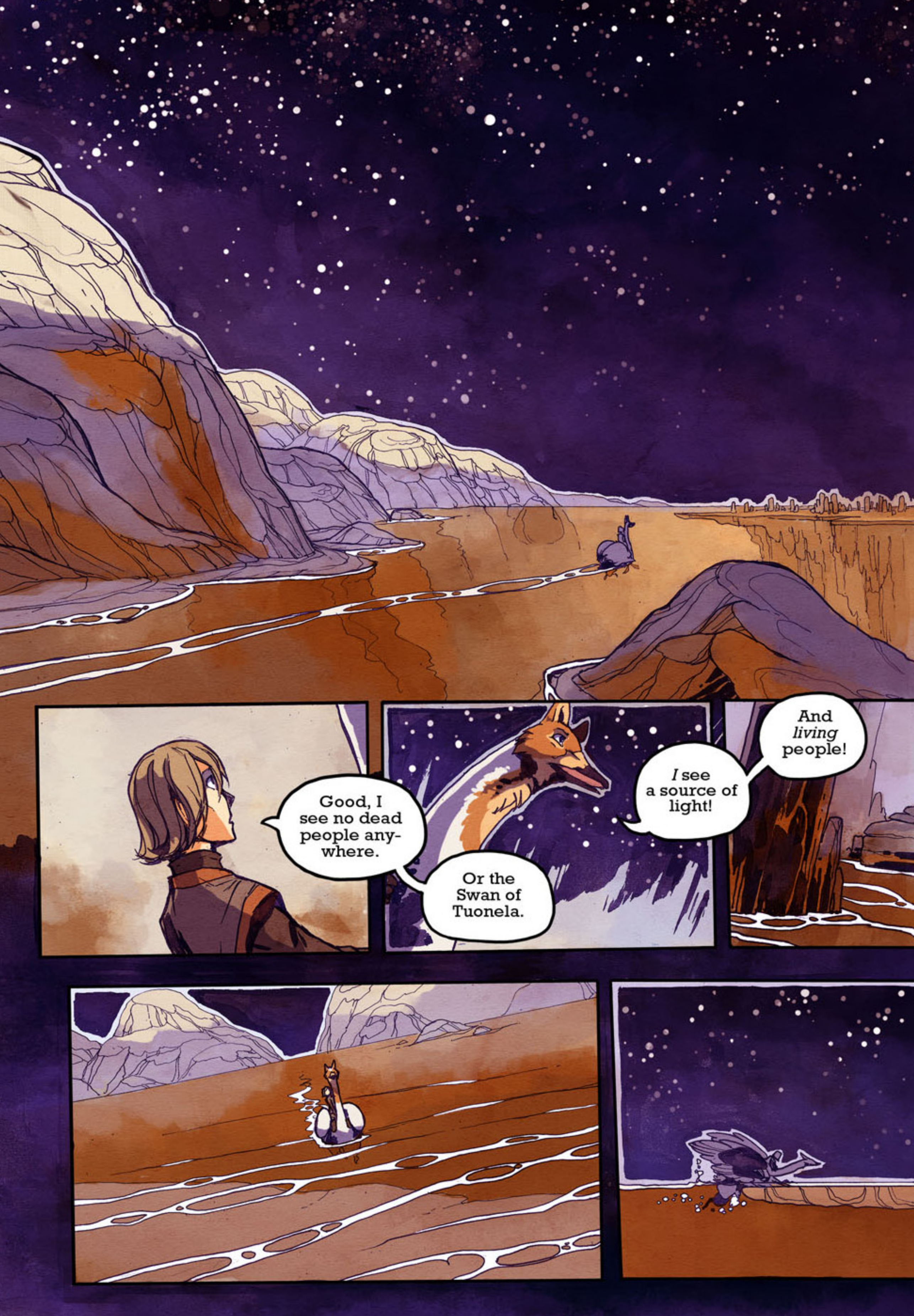


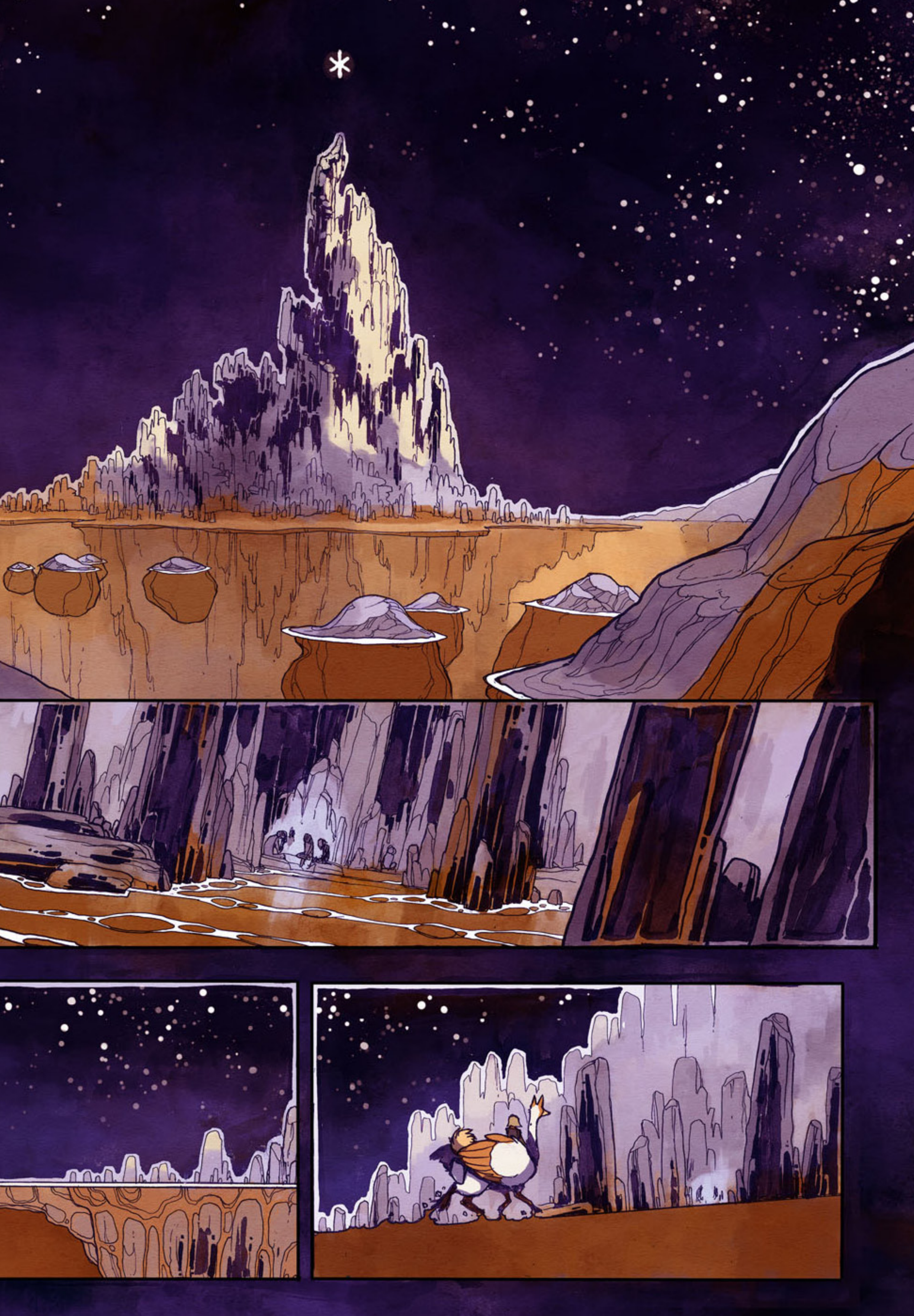

Yeah, you'd better flee!
Or I'll kill you dead next time!

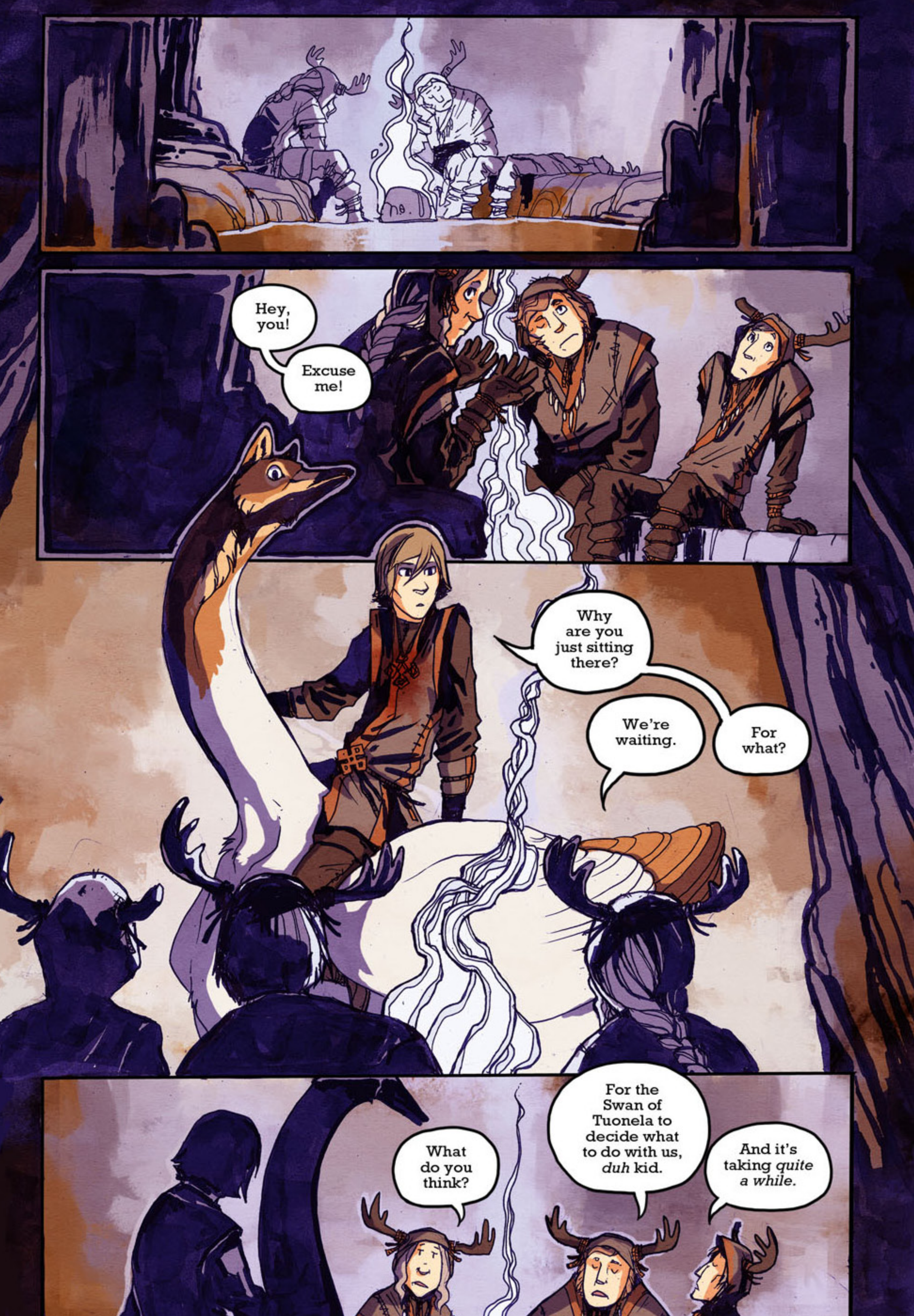

Hannu! Are you hurt?!
No... I'm fine!
You're not fine!
You're bleeding!
It's just scratches and bruises...
B-but... blood! There's blood!
There's not even a lot, it's all watered down.
It's not like the thing ripped my heart out or anything!
I'm *not* dying!

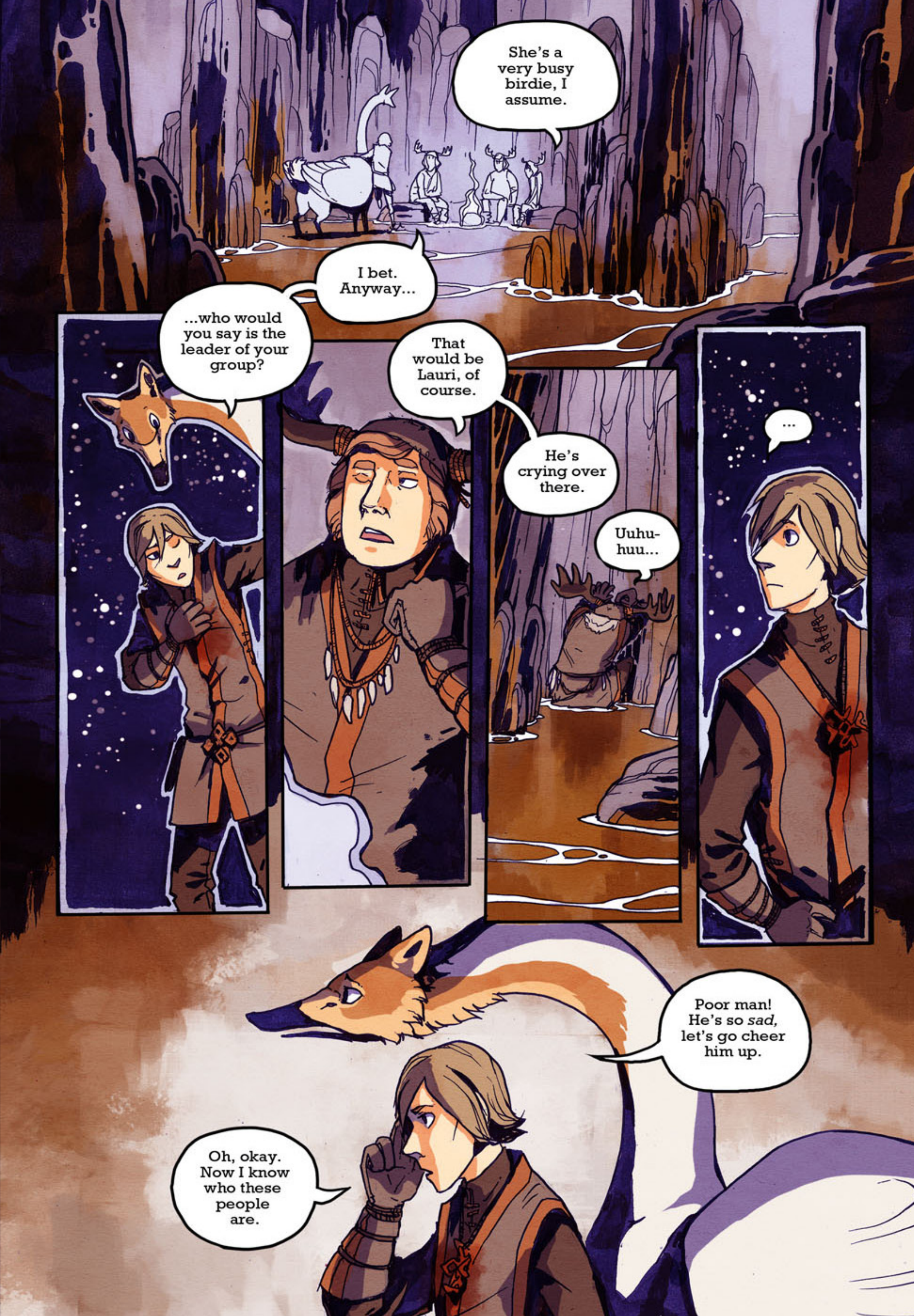

I swear I have a horrible bruise on my chest, though.
Huh, I guess that swan could have done some serious damage without this thingie on.
Please stop almost dying!
It makes me so scared!
I'll try, I promise.

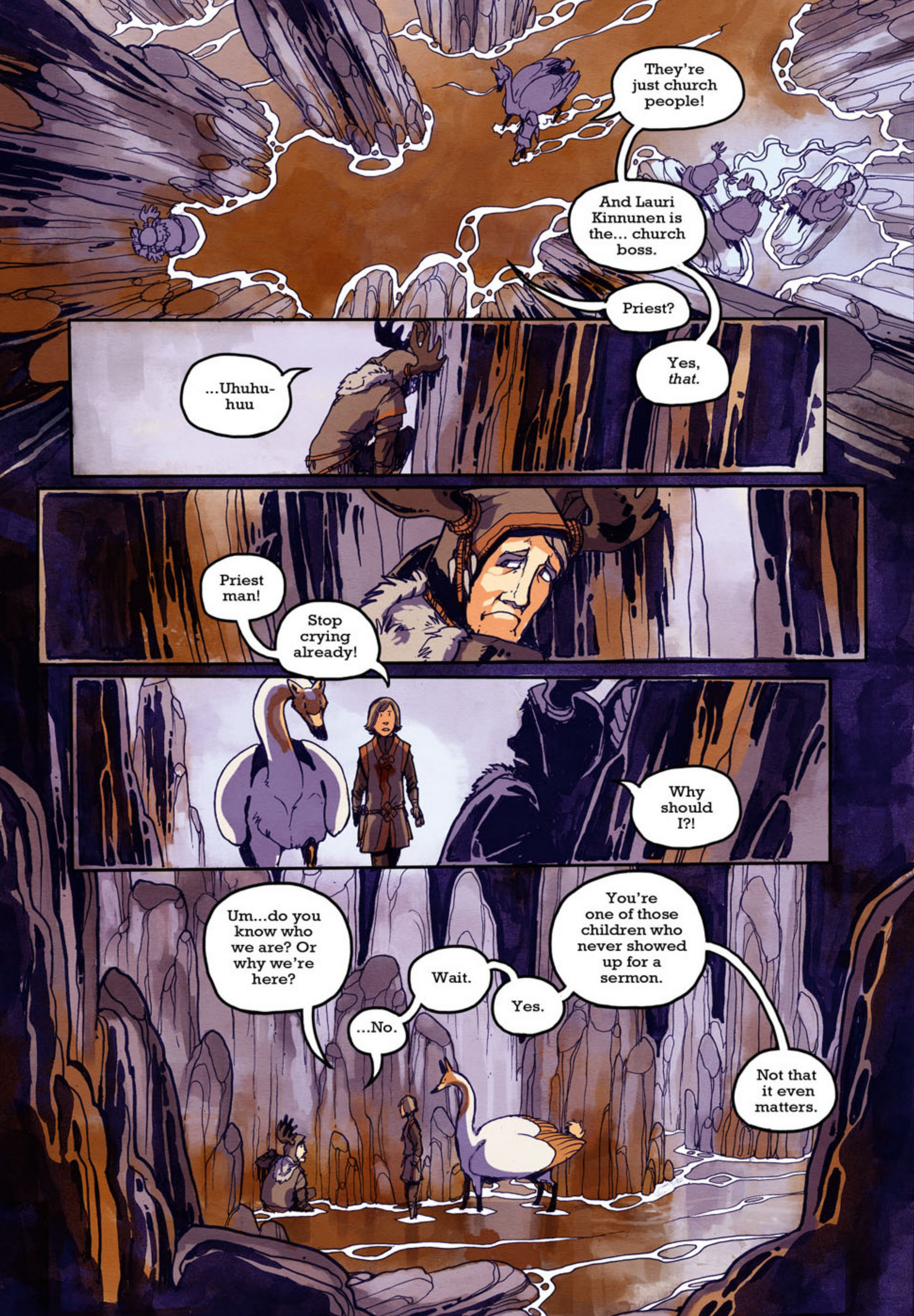

Umm.
Hannuuu... I think we're *there* now.
Where?
I don't really know. Look!
...
Oh...
...end of the road, apparently.

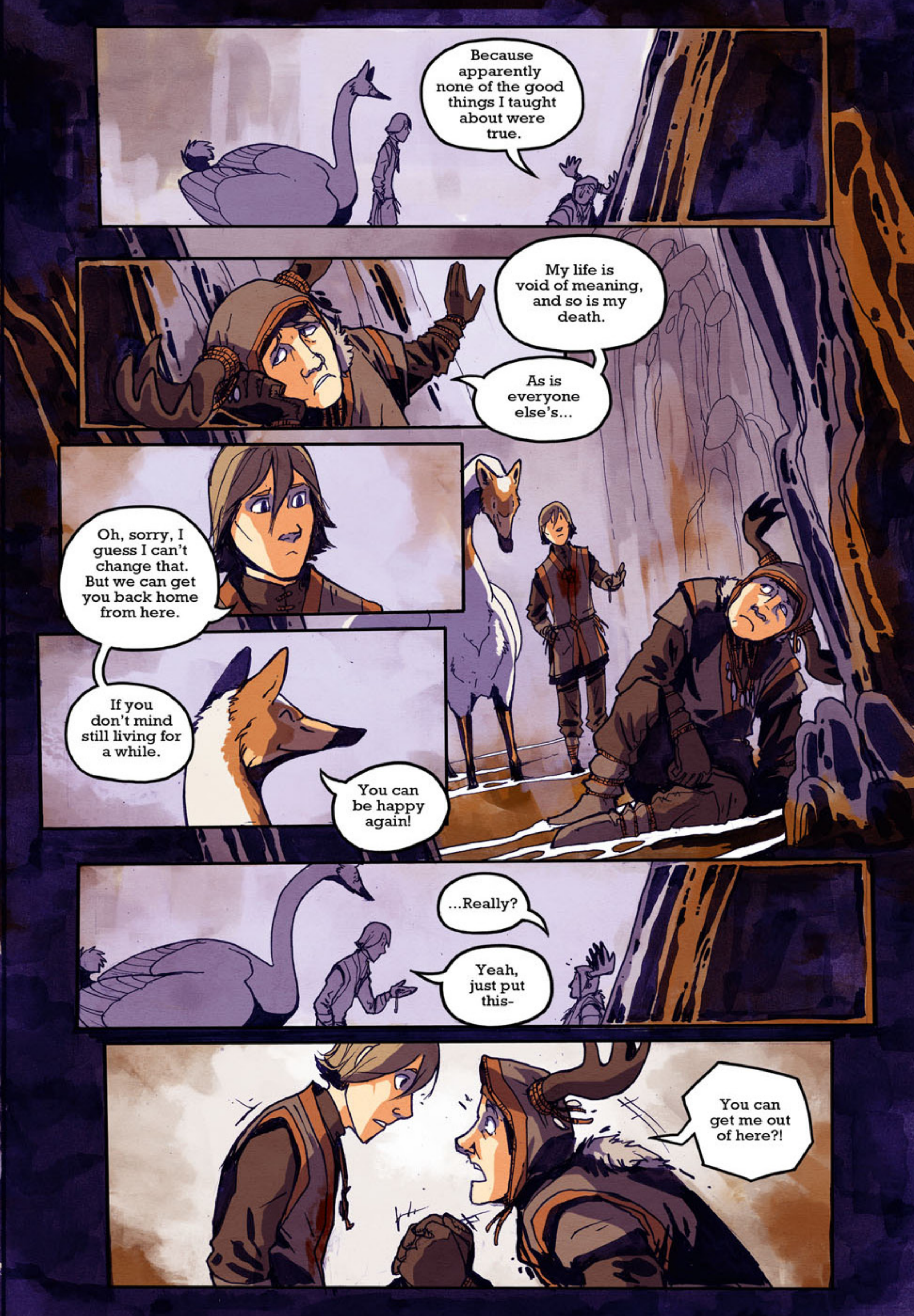

Good, I see no dead people anywhere.
Or the Swan of Tuonela.
I see a source of light!
And *living* people!

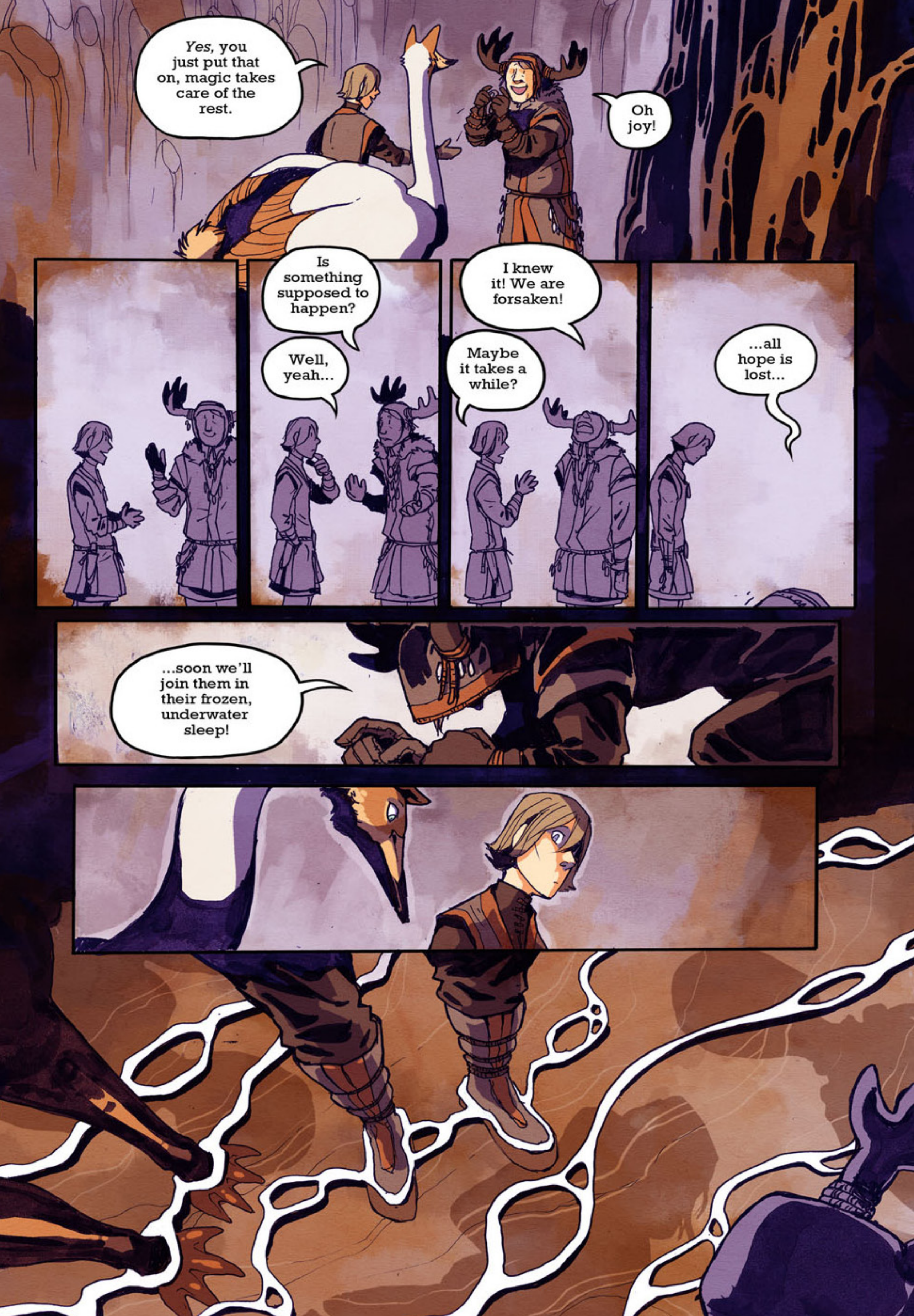


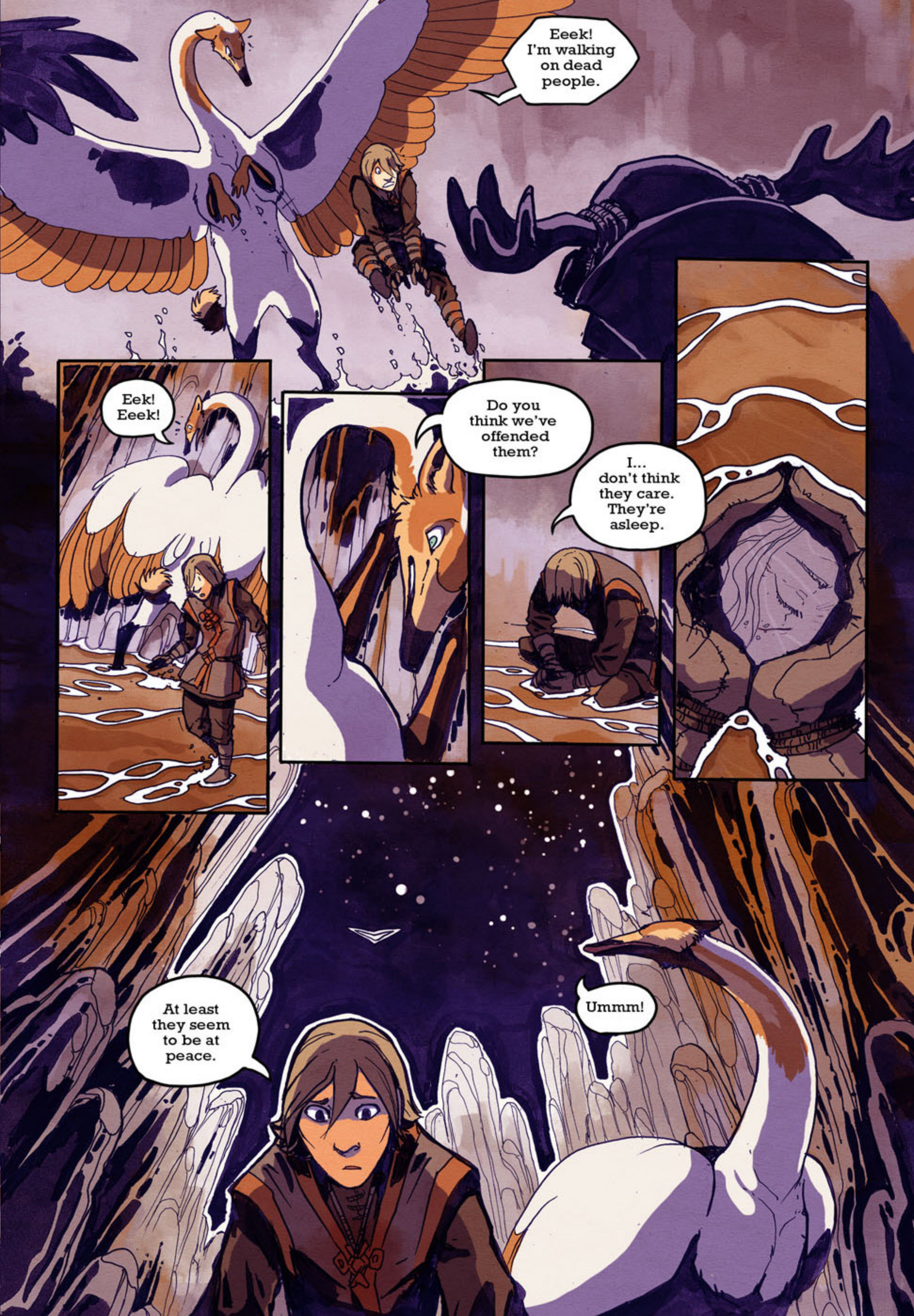

Hey, you!
Excuse me!
Why are you just sitting there?
We're waiting.
For what?
What do you think?
For the Swan of Tuonela to decide what to do with us, *duh* kid.
And it's taking *quite a while.*

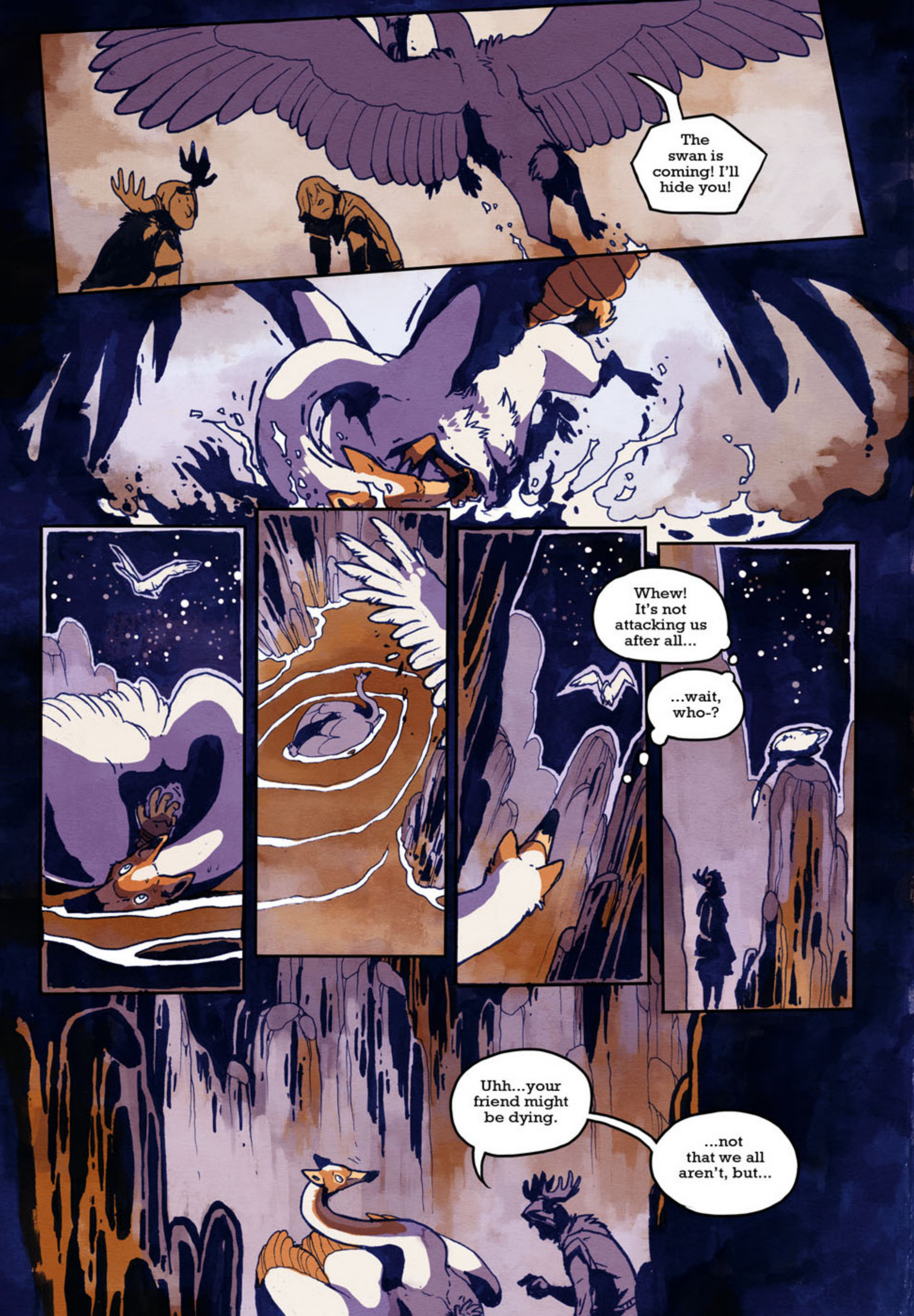

She's a very busy birdie, I assume.
I bet. Anyway...
...who would you say is the leader of your group?
That would be Lauri, of course.
He's crying over there.
Uuhu-huu...
...
Poor man! He's so *sad,* let's go cheer him up.
Oh, okay. Now I know who these people are.

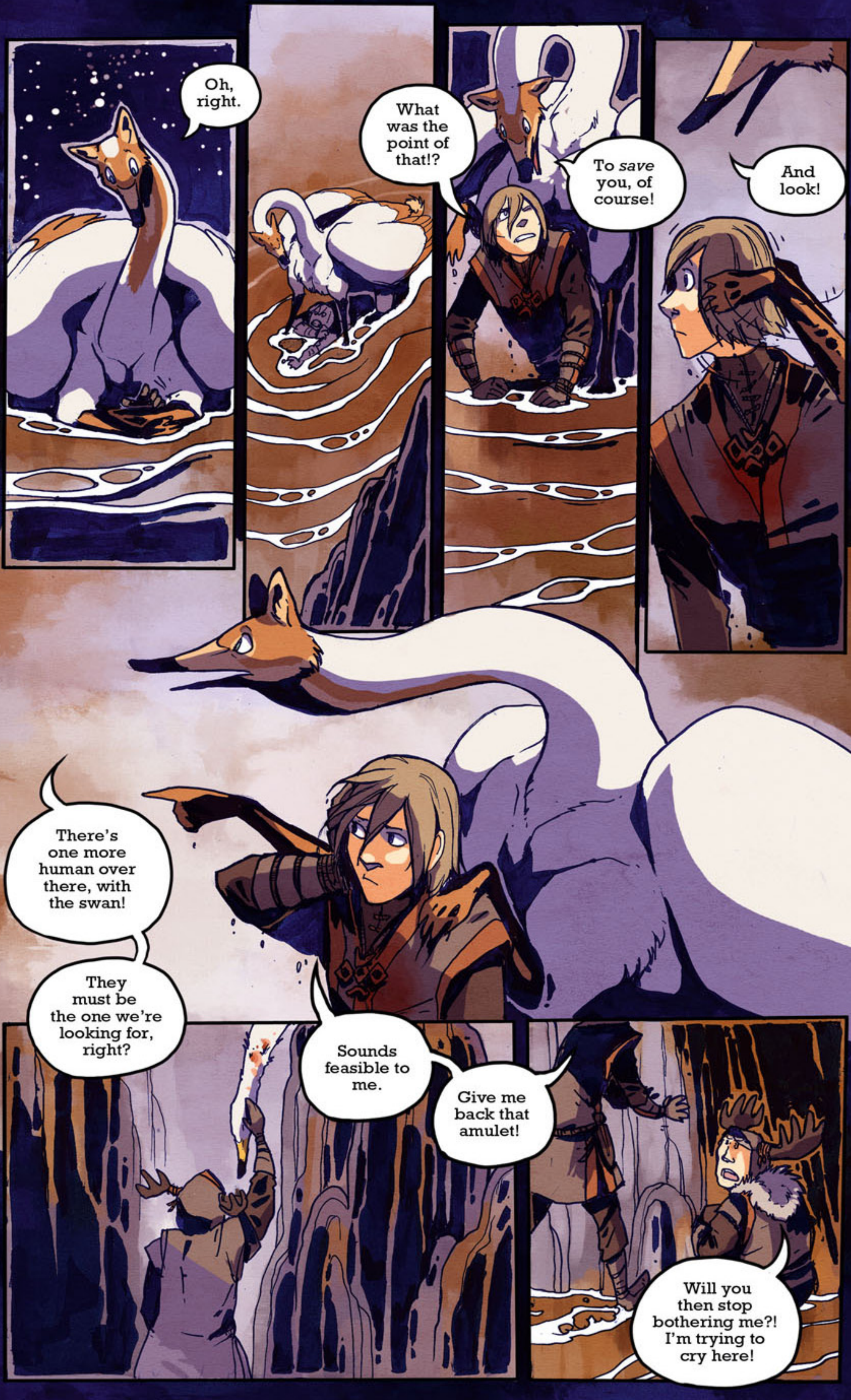

They're just church people!
And Lauri Kinnunen is the... church boss.
Priest?
Yes, *that*.
...Uhuhu-huu
Priest man!
Stop crying already!
Why should I?!
Um...do you know who we are? Or why we're here?
...No.
Wait.
Yes.
You're one of those children who never showed up for a sermon.
Not that it even matters.

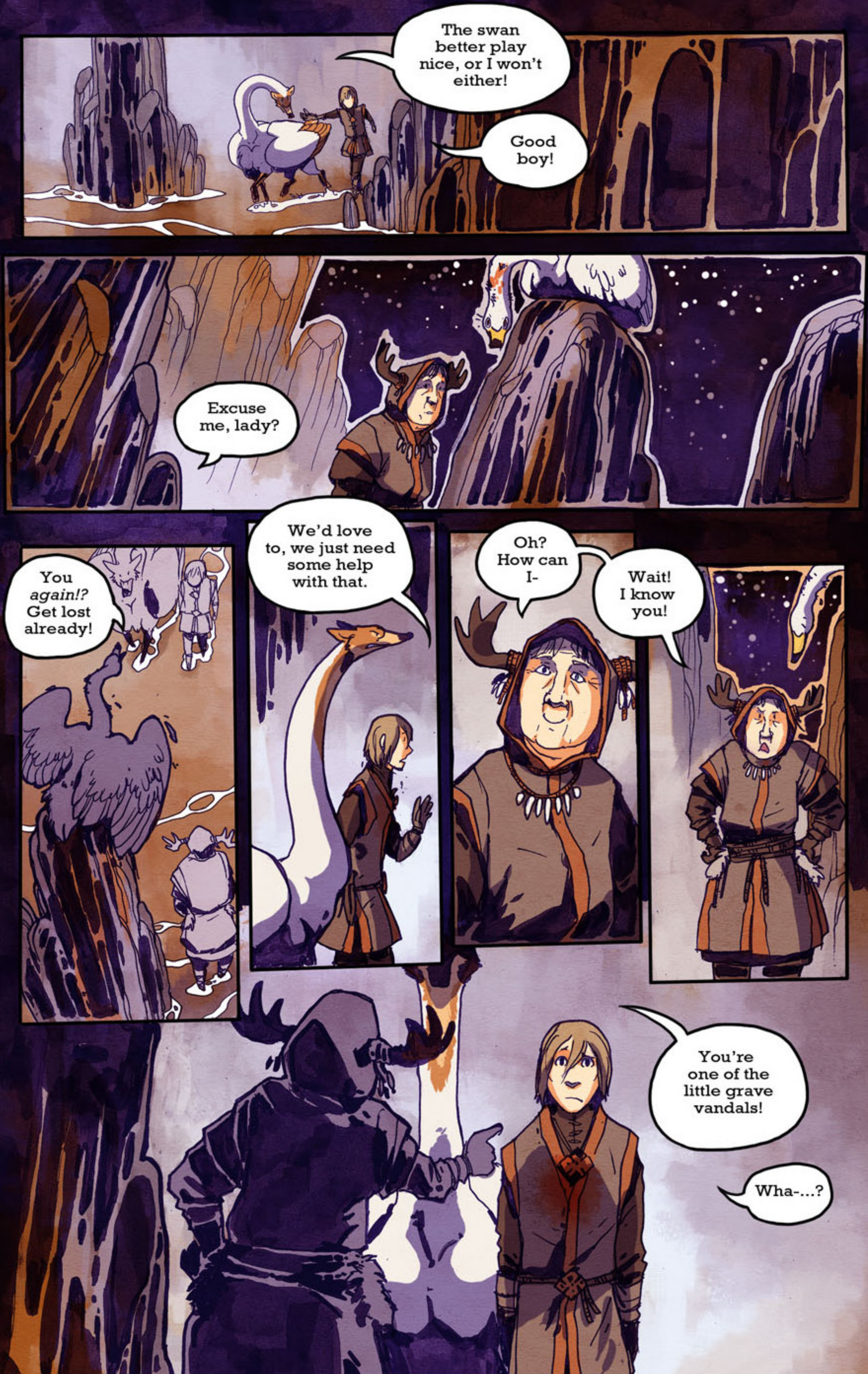

Because apparently none of the good things I taught about were true.
My life is void of meaning, and so is my death.
As is everyone else's...
Oh, sorry, I guess I can't change that. But we can get you back home from here.
If you don't mind still living for a while.
You can be happy again!
...Really?
Yeah, just put this-
You can get me out of here?!

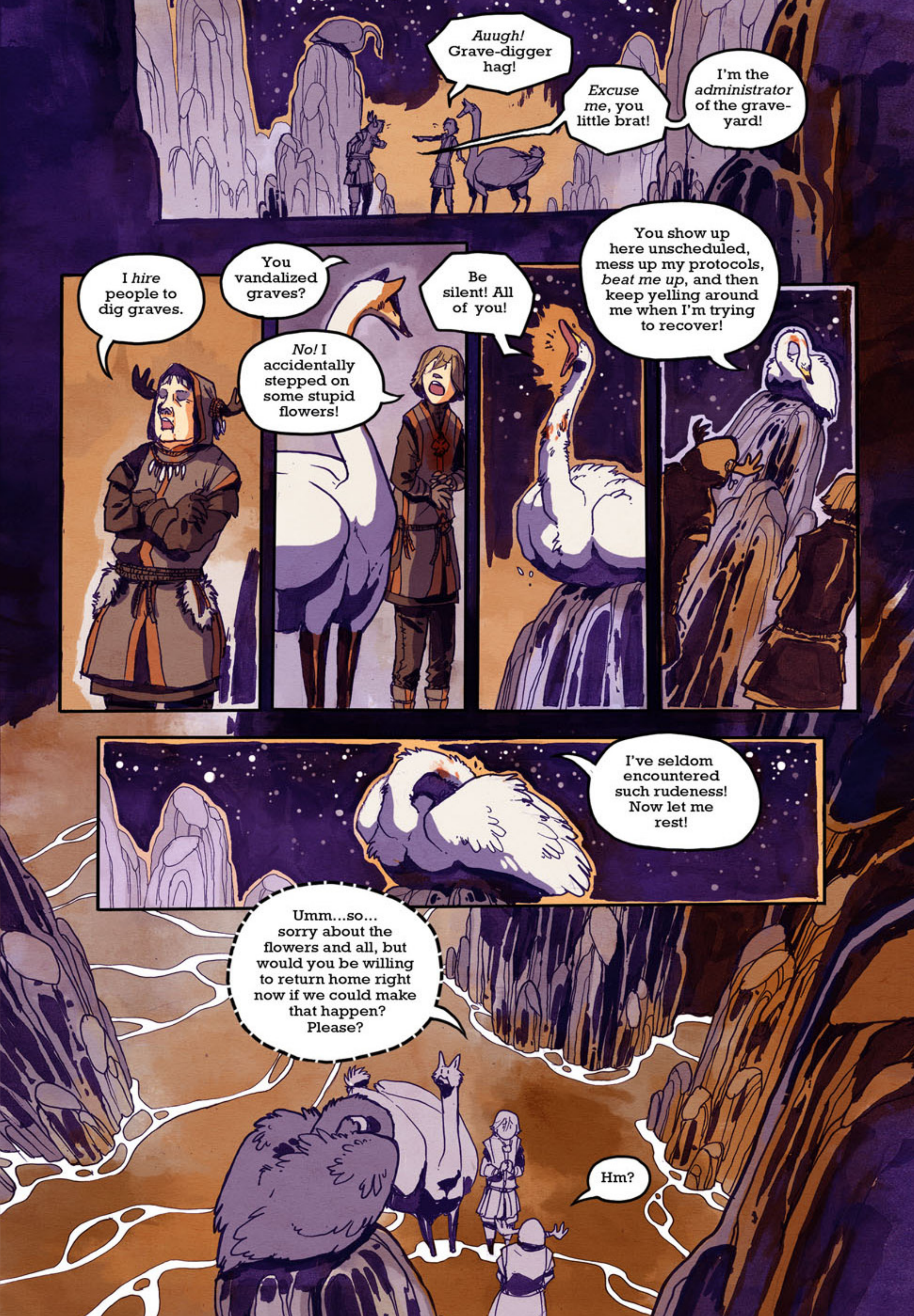

Yes, you just put that on, magic takes care of the rest.
Oh joy!
Is something supposed to happen?
Well, yeah...
I knew it! We are forsaken!
Maybe it takes a while?
...all hope is lost...
...soon we'll join them in their frozen, underwater sleep!

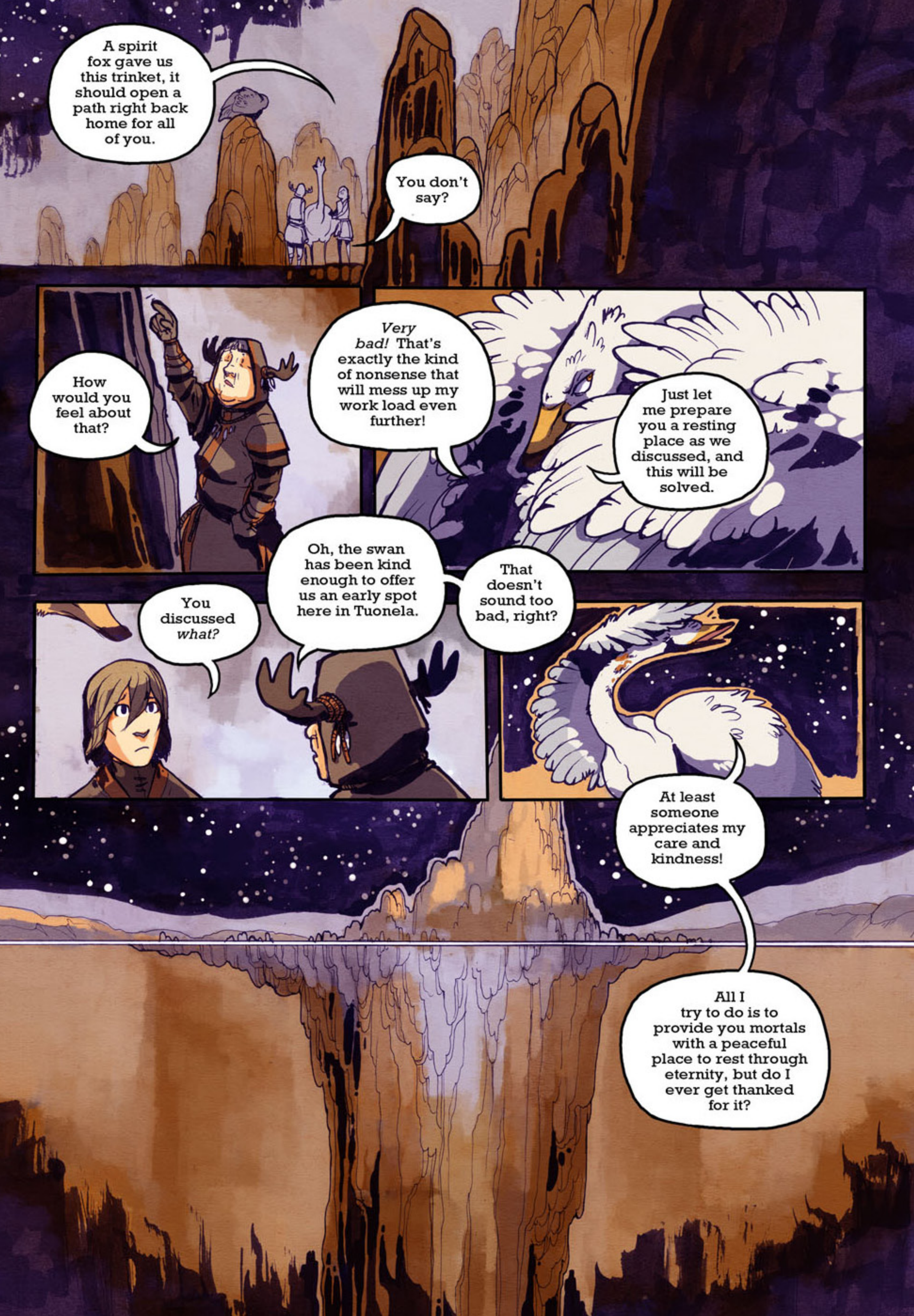

Eeek! I'm walking on dead people.
Eek! Eeek!
Do you think we've offended them?
I... don't think they care. They're asleep.
At least they seem to be at peace.
Ummm!

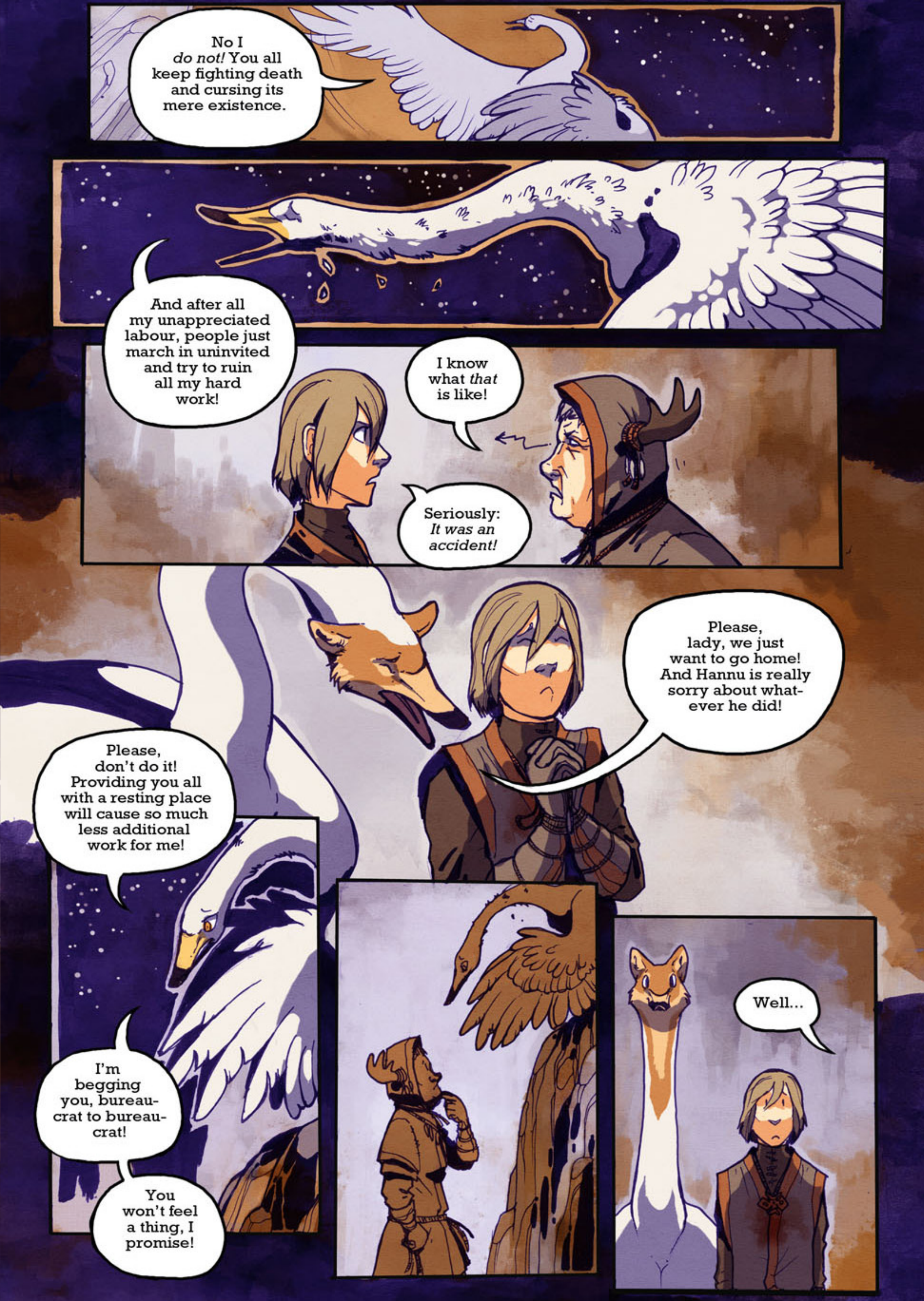

The swan is coming! I'll hide you!
Whew! It's not attacking us after all...
...wait, who-?
Uhh...your friend might be dying.
...not that we all aren't, but...

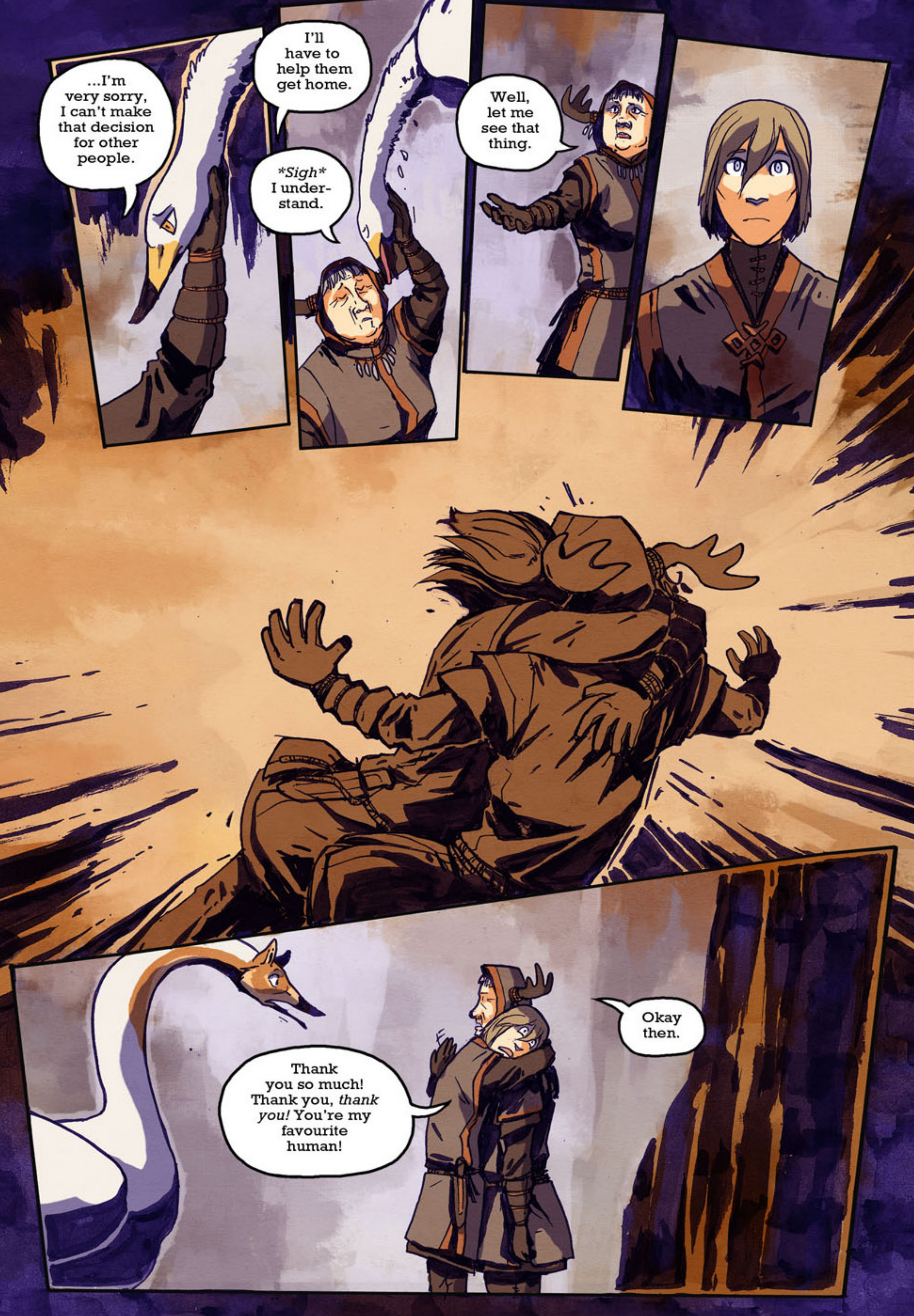

Oh, right.
What was the point of that!?
To *save* you, of course!
And look!
There's one more human over there, with the swan!
They must be the one we're looking for, right?
Sounds feasible to me.
Give me back that amulet!
Will you then stop bothering me?! I'm trying to cry here!

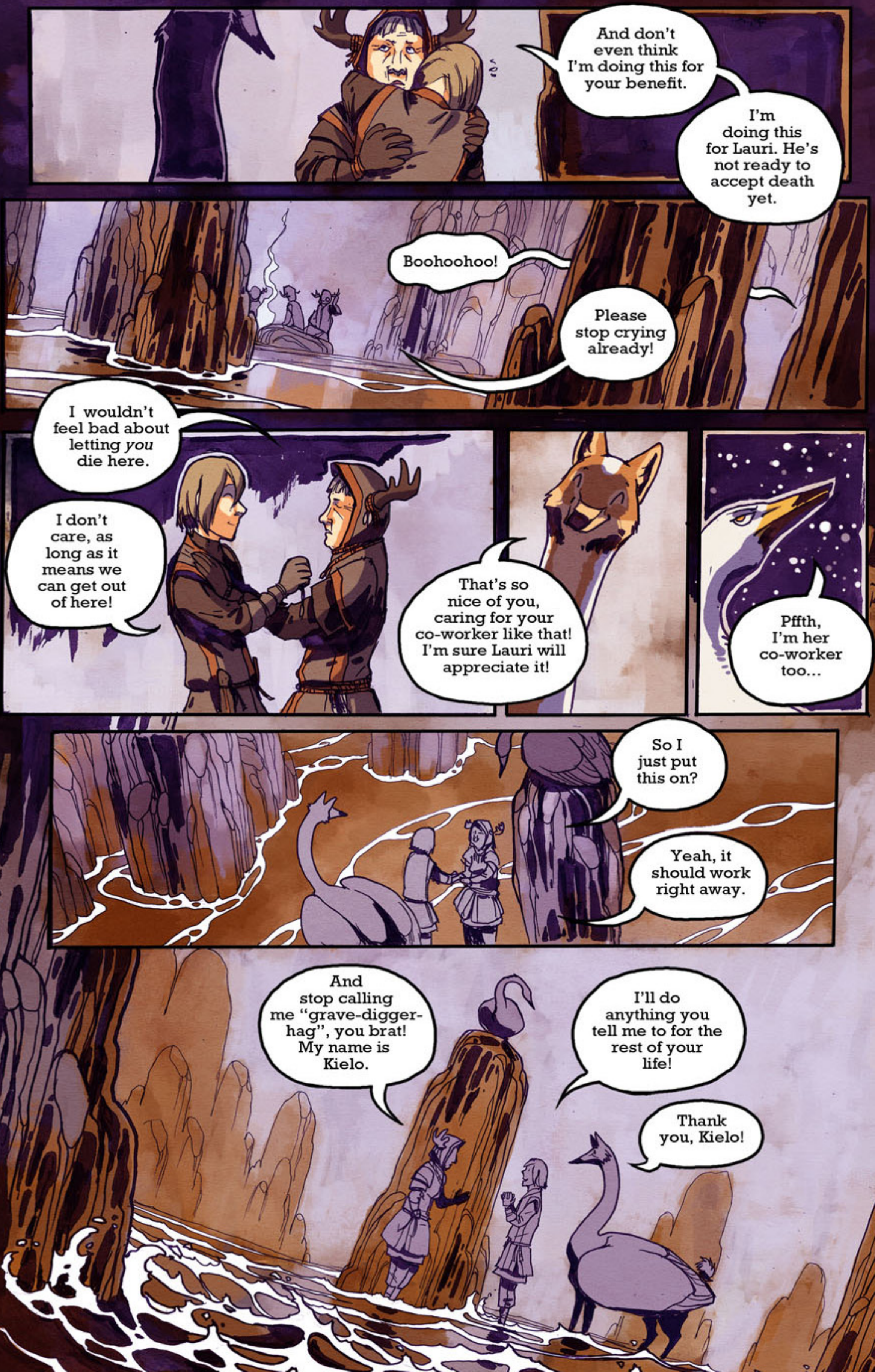

The swan better play nice, or I won't either!
Good boy!
Excuse me, lady?
You *again!?* Get lost already!
We'd love to, we just need some help with that.
Oh? How can I-
Wait! I know you!
You're one of the little grave vandals!
Wha-...?

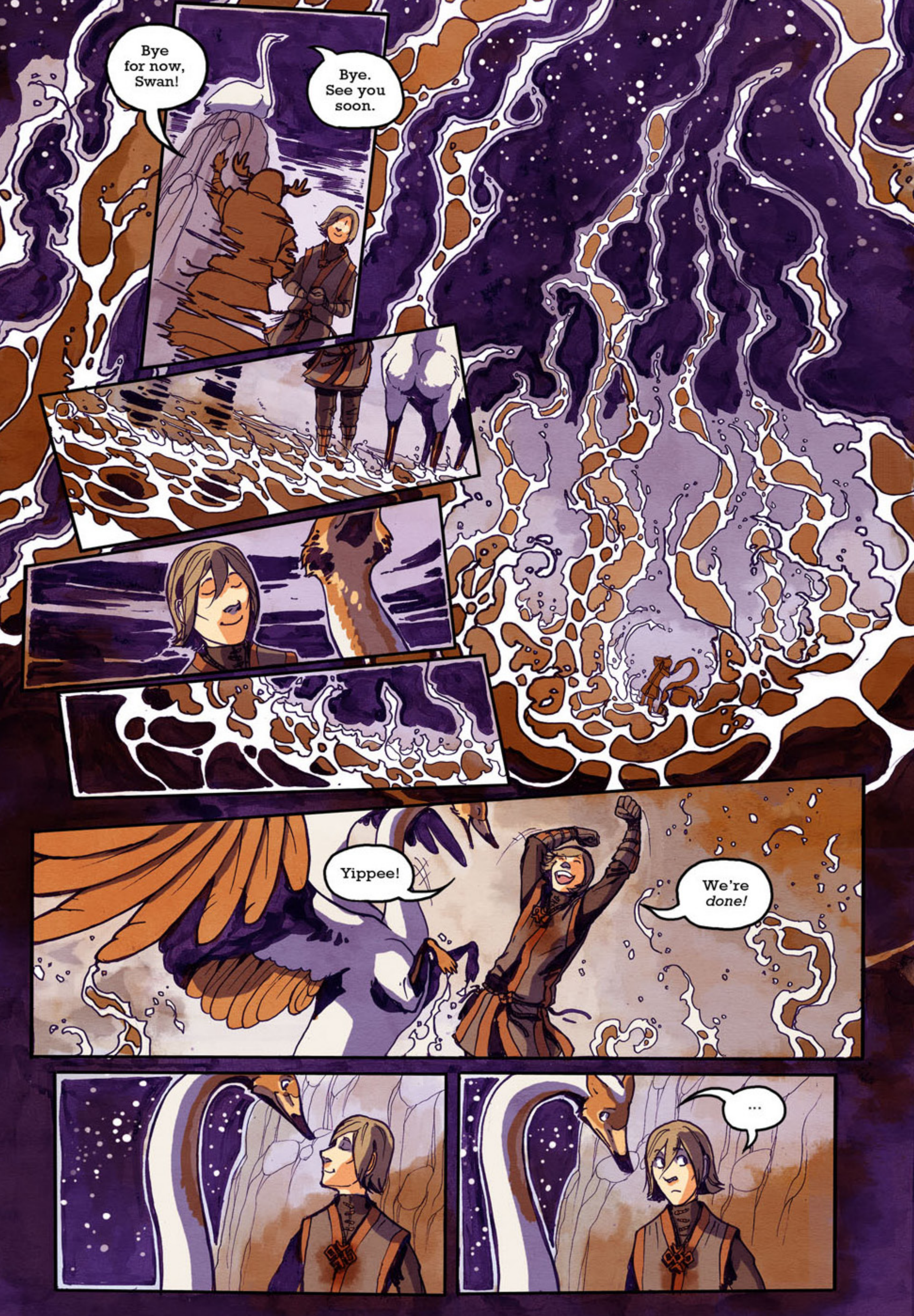

Auugh! Grave-digger hag!
Excuse me, you little brat!
I'm the *administrator* of the graveyard!
I *hire* people to dig graves.
You vandalized graves?
No! I accidentally stepped on some stupid flowers!
Be silent! All of you!
You show up here unscheduled, mess up my protocols, *beat me up*, and then keep yelling around me when I'm trying to recover!
I've seldom encountered such rudeness! Now let me rest!
Umm...so... sorry about the flowers and all, but would you be willing to return home right now if we could make that happen? Please?
Hm?

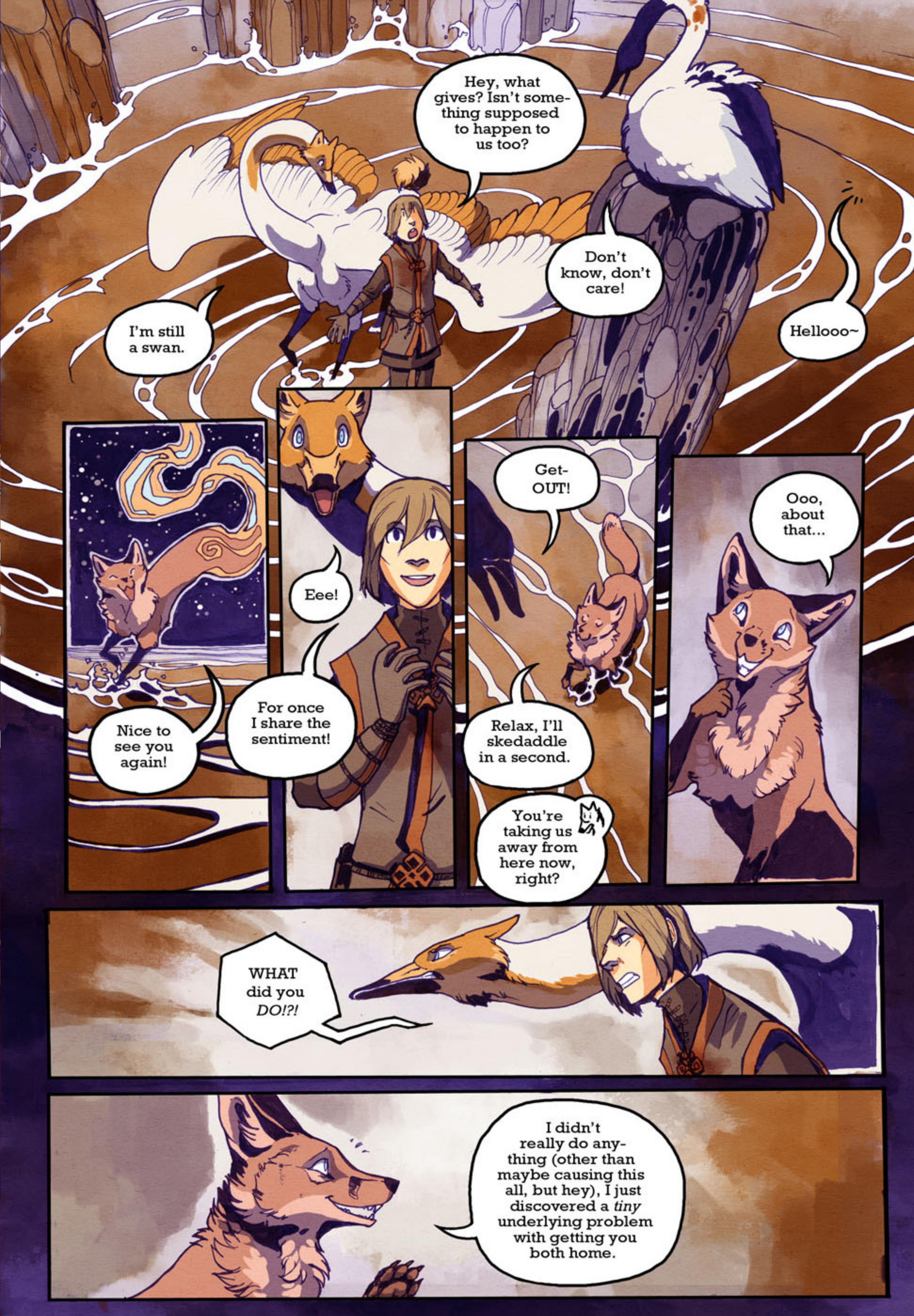

A spirit fox gave us this trinket, it should open a path right back home for all of you.
You don't say?
How would you feel about that?
Very bad! That's exactly the kind of nonsense that will mess up my work load even further!
Just let me prepare you a resting place as we discussed, and this will be solved.
You discussed *what?*
Oh, the swan has been kind enough to offer us an early spot here in Tuonela.
That doesn't sound too bad, right?
At least someone appreciates my care and kindness!
All I try to do is to provide you mortals with a peaceful place to rest through eternity, but do I ever get thanked for it?

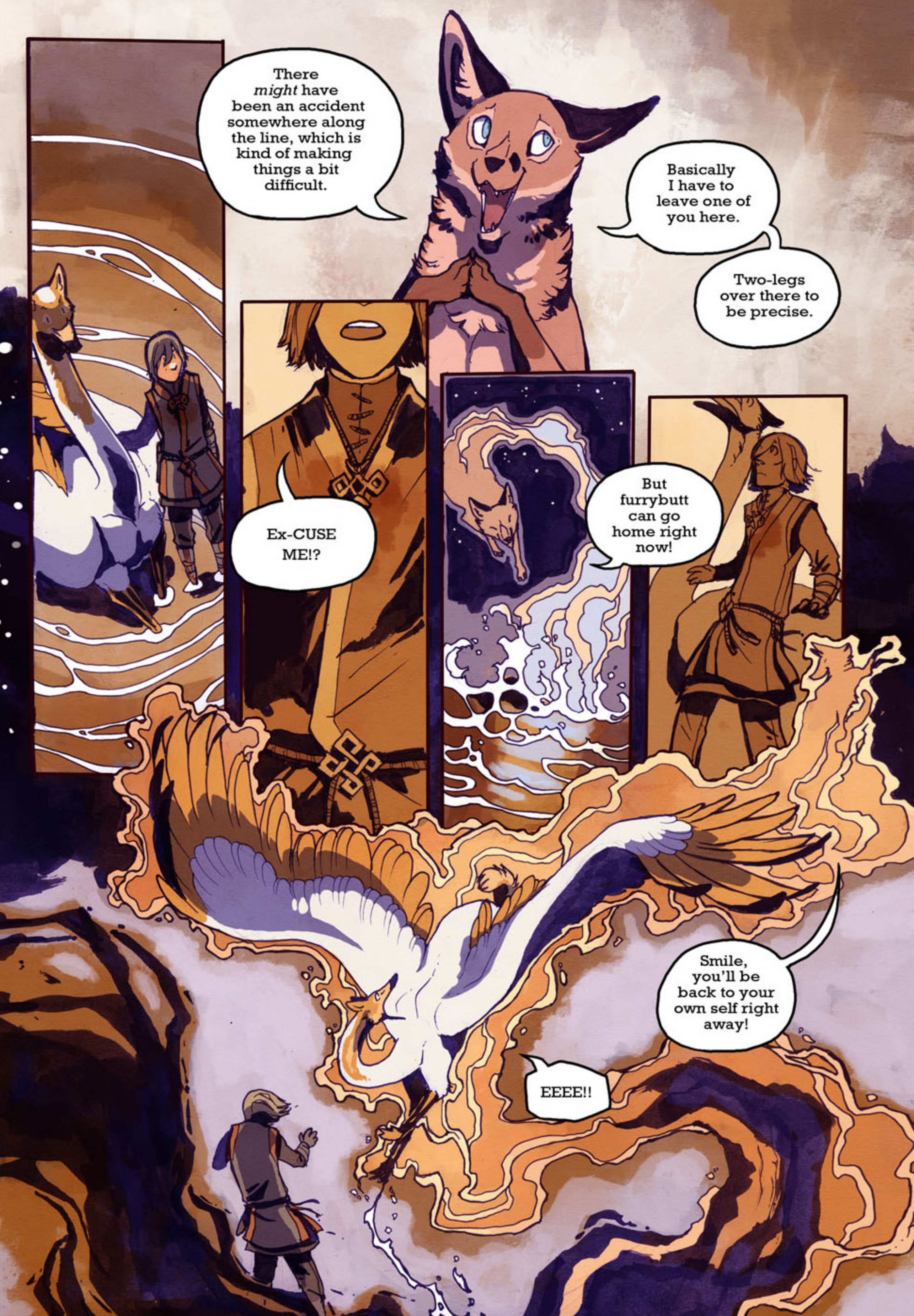

No I *do not!* You all keep fighting death and cursing its mere existence.
And after all my unappreciated labour, people just march in uninvited and try to ruin all my hard work!
I know what *that* is like!
Seriously: *It was an accident!*
Please, lady, we just want to go home! And Hannu is really sorry about whatever he did!
Please, don't do it! Providing you all with a resting place will cause so much less additional work for me!
I'm begging you, bureaucrat to bureaucrat!
You won't feel a thing, I promise!
Well...

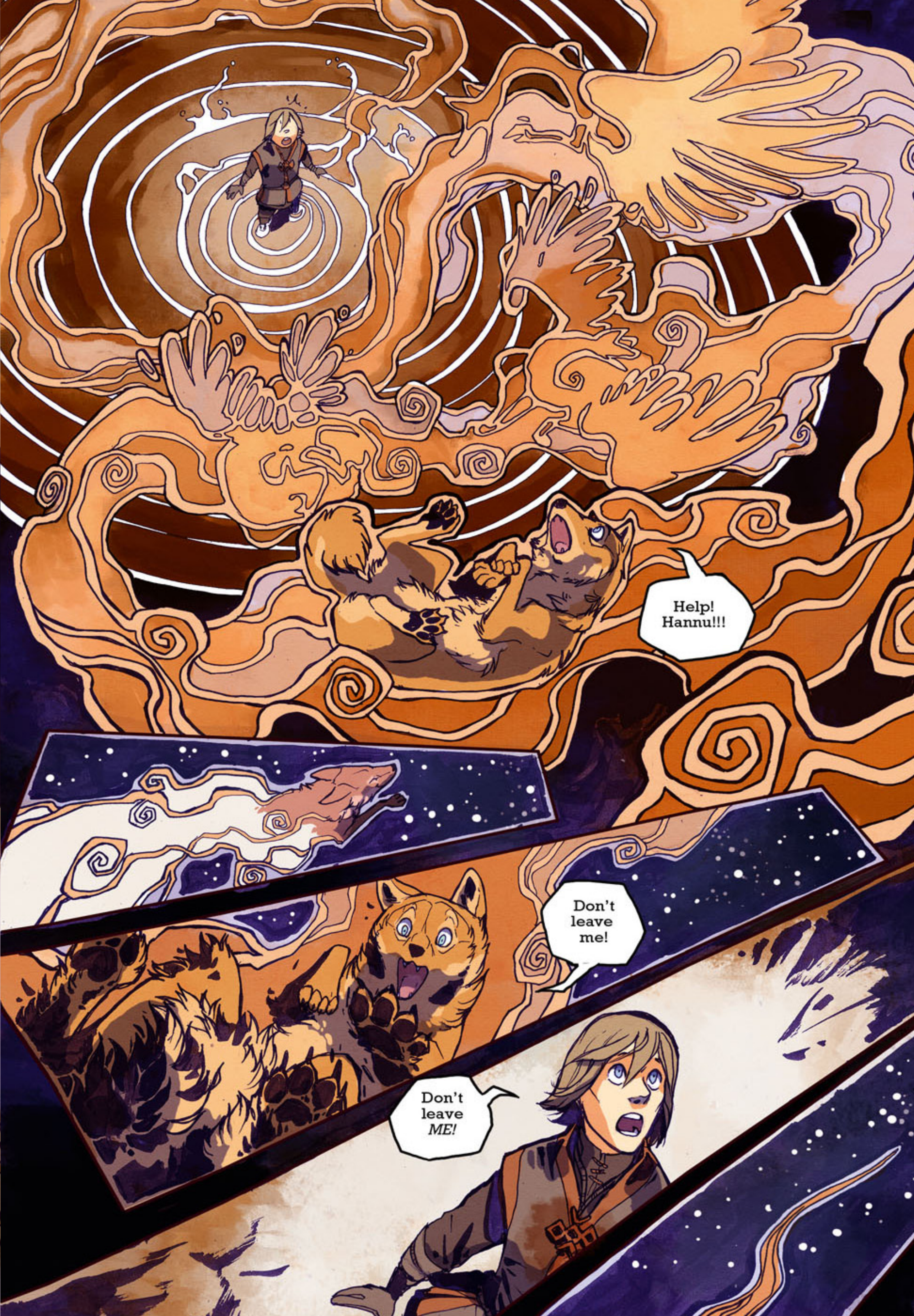

...I'm very sorry, I can't make that decision for other people.
I'll have to help them get home.
Sigh I understand.
Well, let me see that thing.
Okay then.
Thank you so much! Thank you, *thank you!* You're my favourite human!

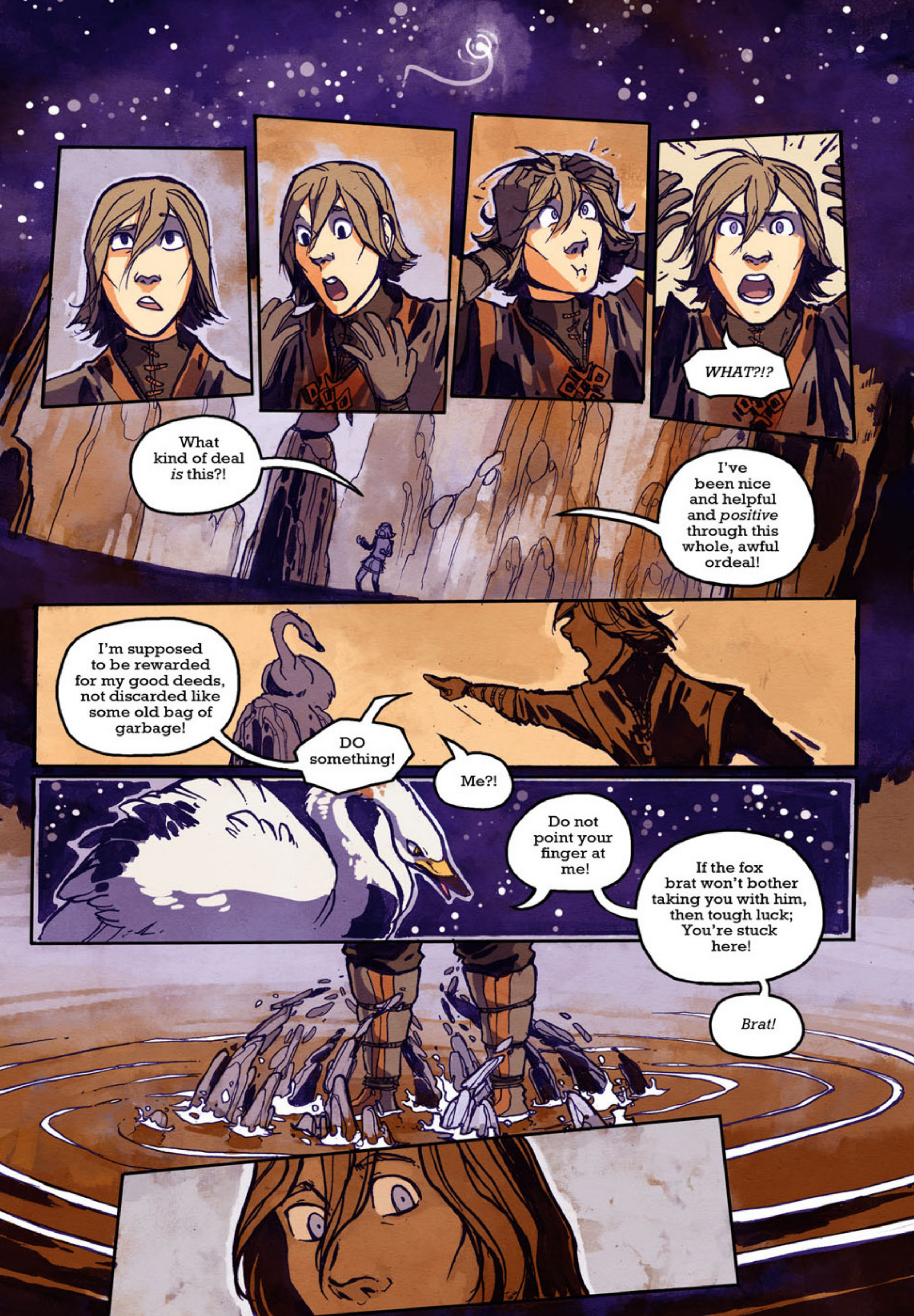

And don't even think I'm doing this for your benefit.
I'm doing this for Lauri. He's not ready to accept death yet.
Boohoohoo!
Please stop crying already!
I wouldn't feel bad about letting *you* die here.
I don't care, as long as it means we can get out of here!
That's so nice of you, caring for your co-worker like that! I'm sure Lauri will appreciate it!
Pffth, I'm her co-worker too...
So I just put this on?
Yeah, it should work right away.
And stop calling me "grave-digger-hag", you brat! My name is Kielo.
I'll do anything you tell me to for the rest of your life!
Thank you, Kielo!

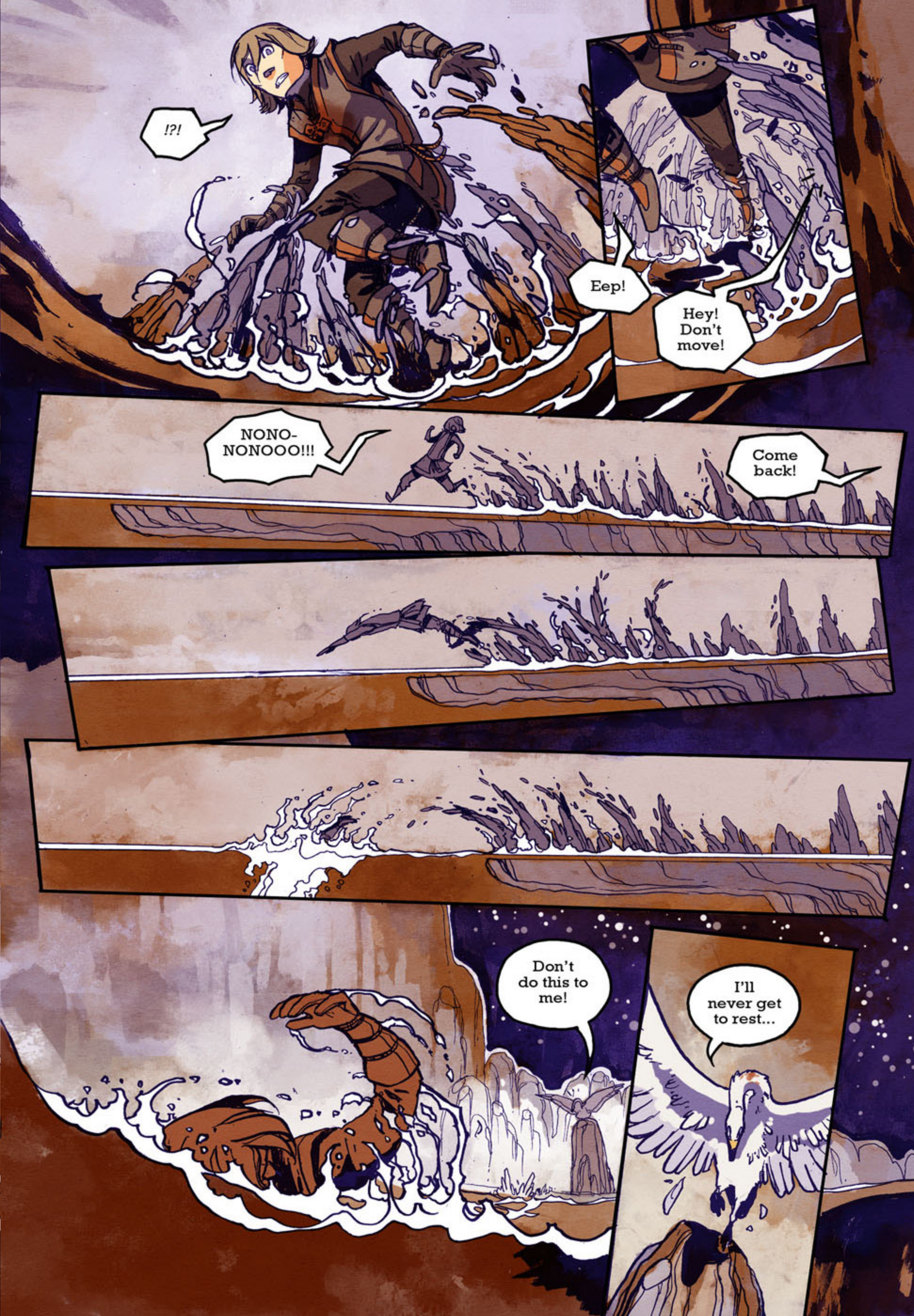

Bye for now, Swan!
Bye. See you soon.
Yippee!
We're *done!*
...

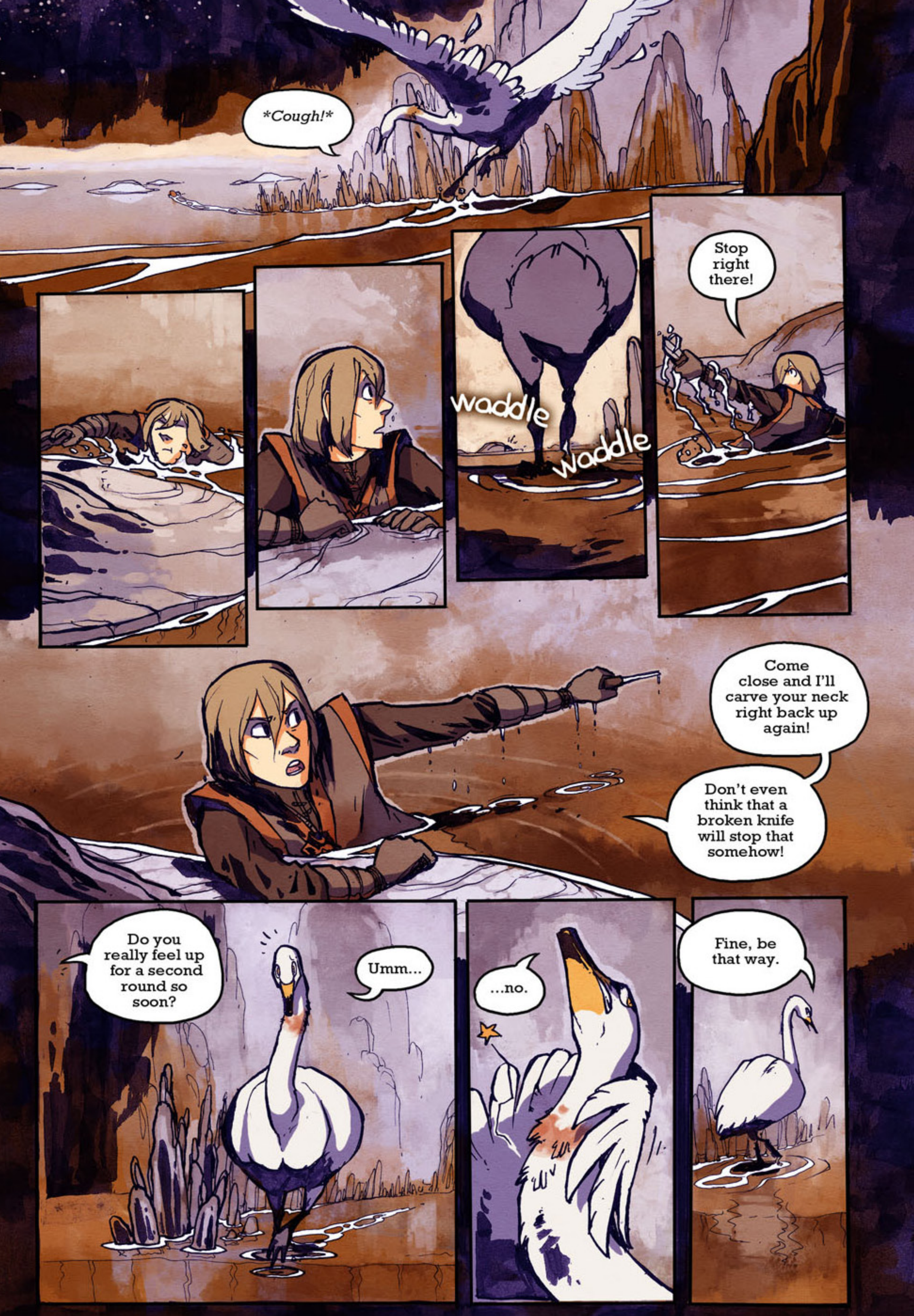

Hey, what gives? Isn't something supposed to happen to us too?
Don't know, don't care!
Hellooo~
I'm still a swan.
Nice to see you again!
Eee!
For once I share the sentiment!
Get-OUT!
Relax, I'll skedaddle in a second.
You're taking us away from here now, right?
Ooo, about that...
WHAT did you *DO!?!*
I didn't really do anything (other than maybe causing this all, but hey), I just discovered a *tiny* underlying problem with getting you both home.

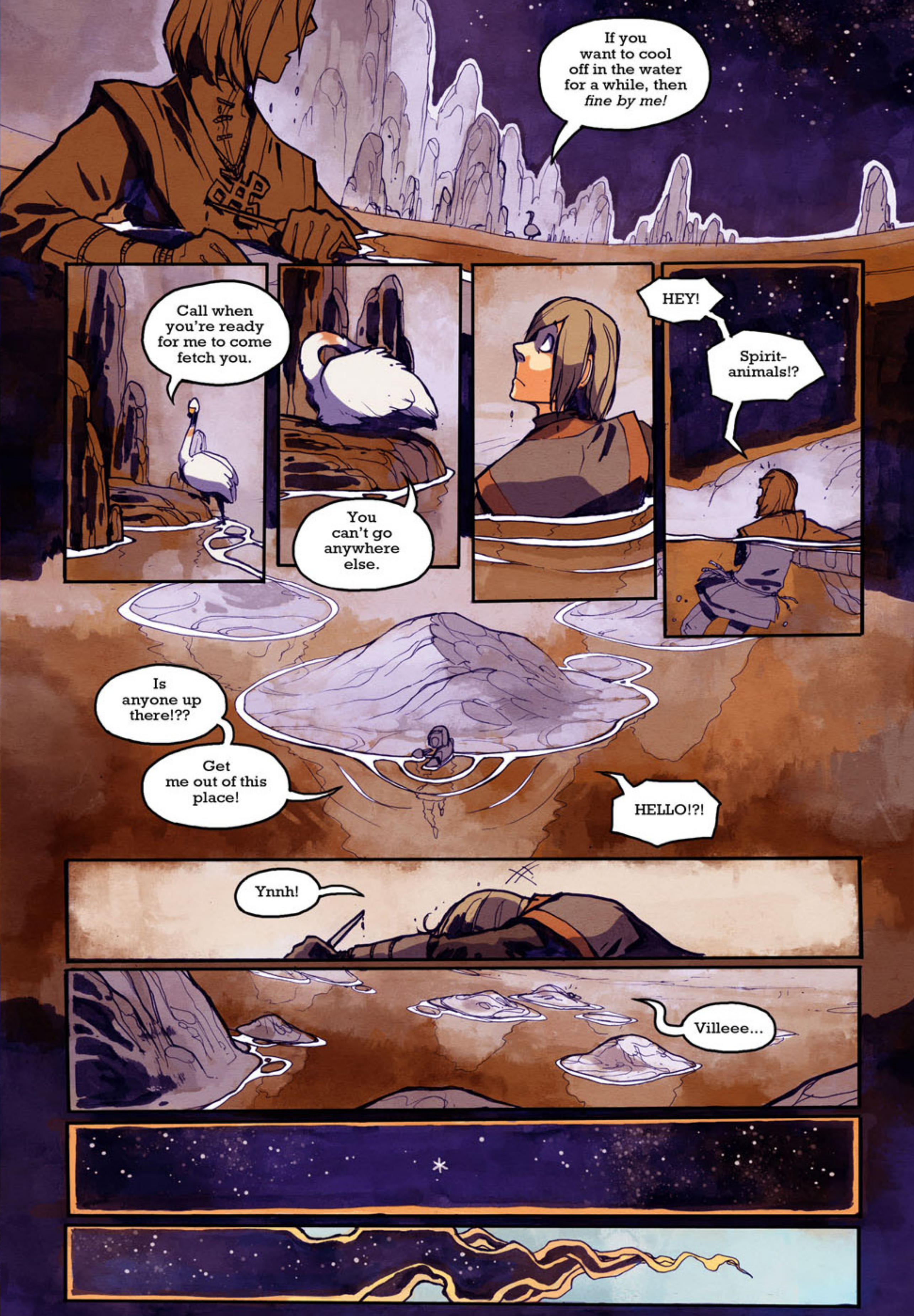

There *might* have been an accident somewhere along the line, which is kind of making things a bit difficult.
Basically I have to leave one of you here.
Two-legs over there to be precise.
Ex-CUSE ME!?
But furrybutt can go home right now!
Smile, you'll be back to your own self right away!
EEEE!!

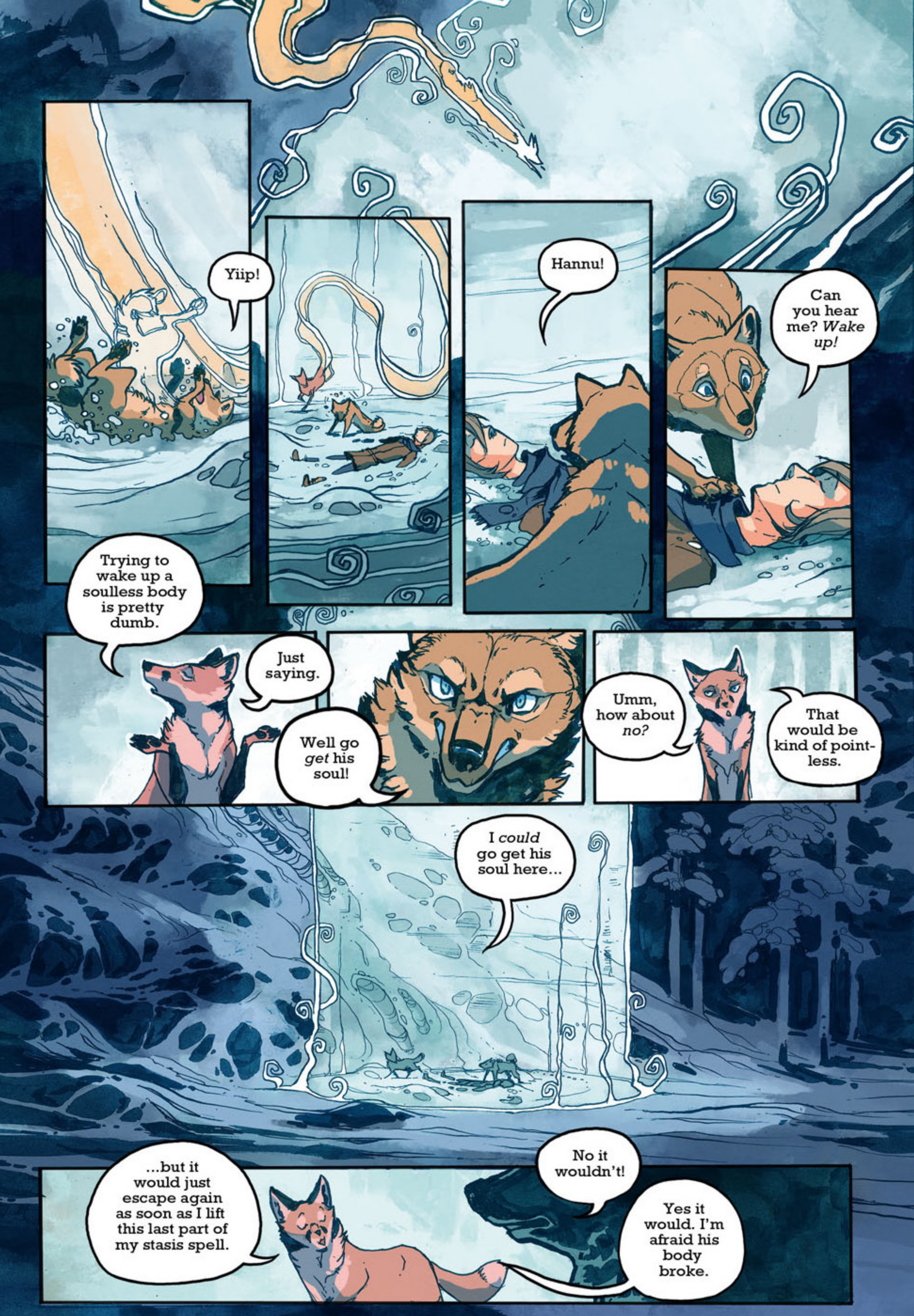

Help! Hannu!!!
Don't leave me!
Don't leave *ME!*

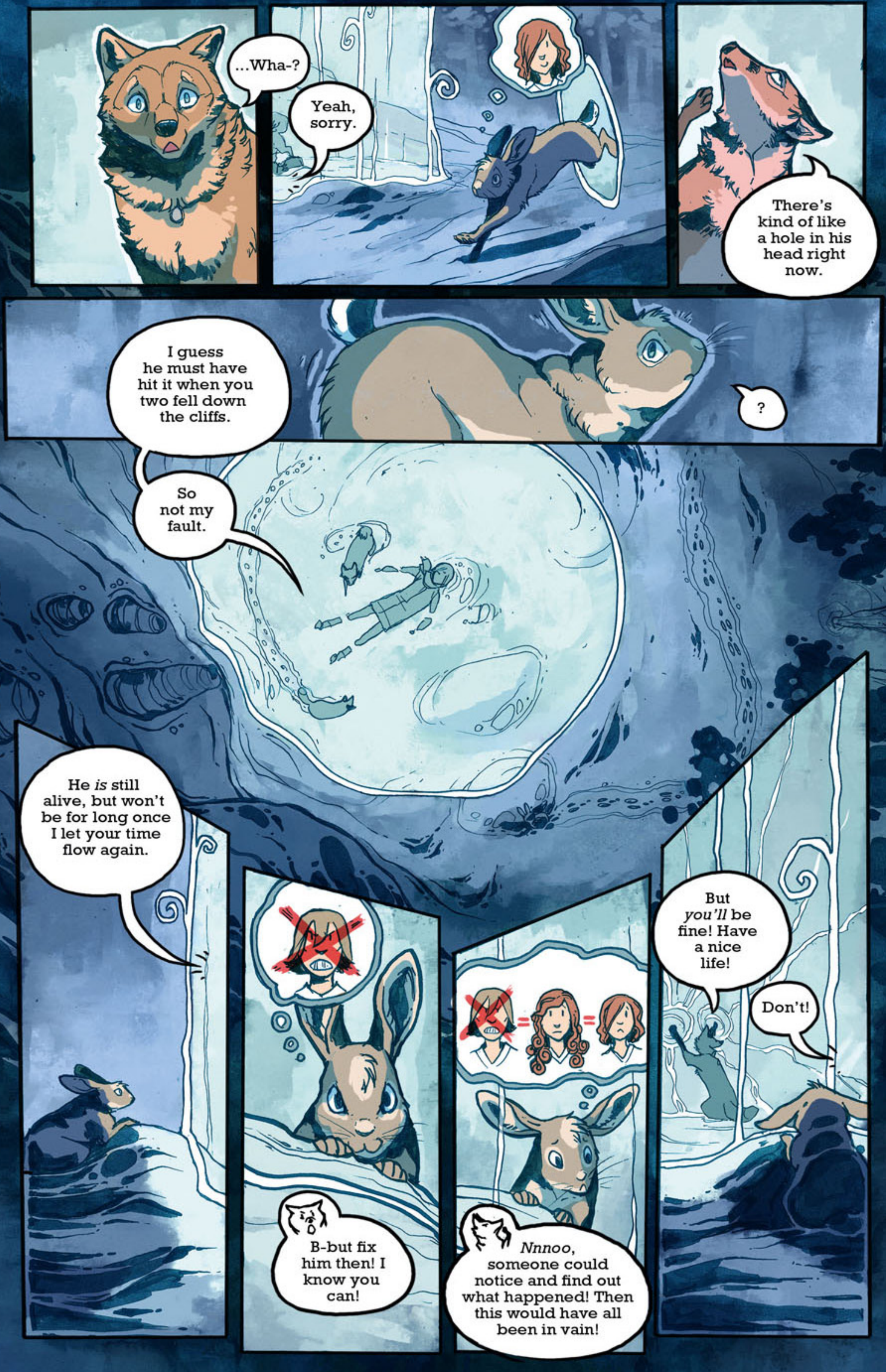

WHAT?!?
What kind of deal *is* this?!
I've been nice and helpful and *positive* through this whole, awful ordeal!
I'm supposed to be rewarded for my good deeds, not discarded like some old bag of garbage!
DO something!
Me?!
Do not point your finger at me!
If the fox brat won't bother taking you with him, then tough luck; You're stuck here!
Brat!

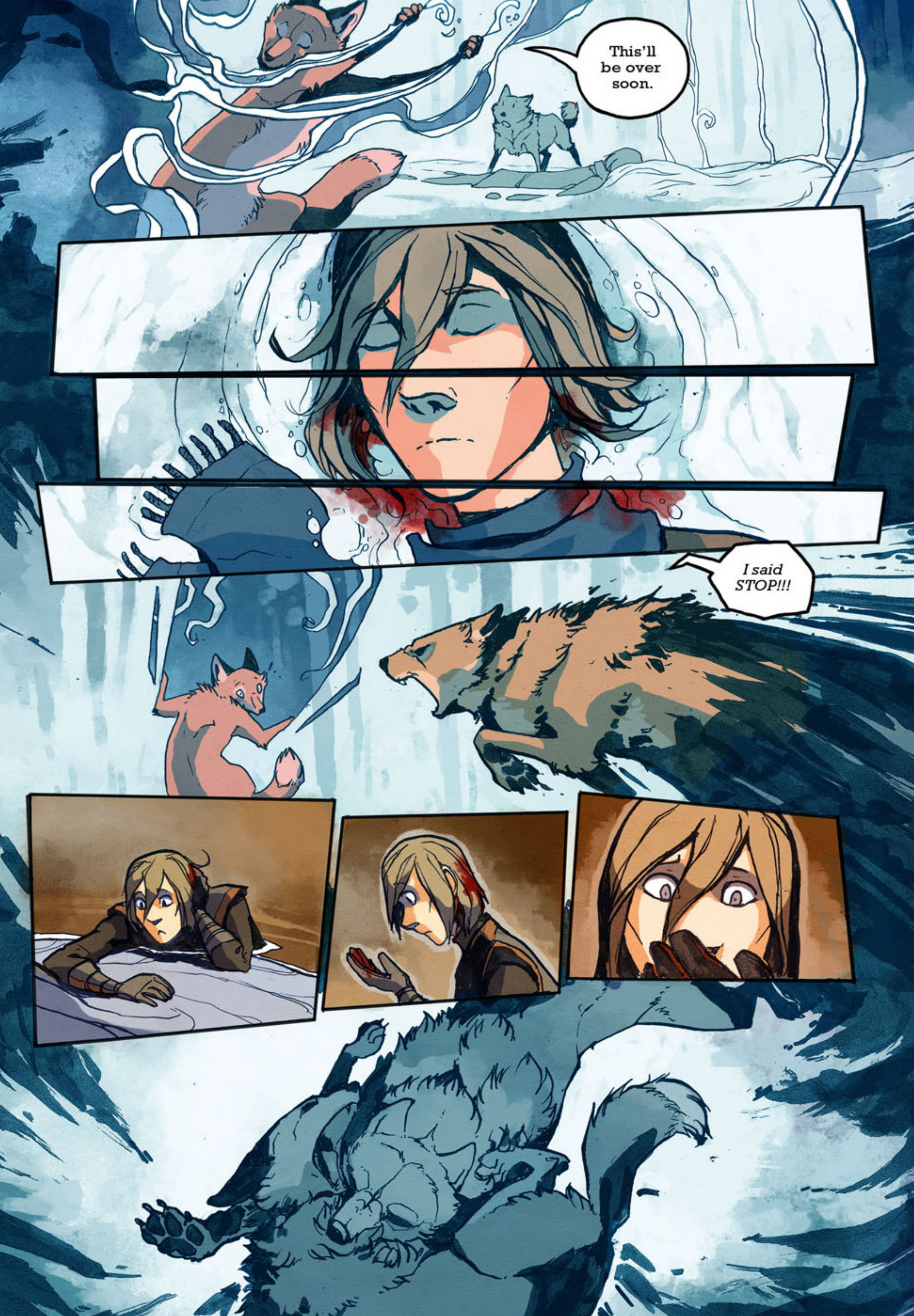

!?!
Eep!
Hey! Don't move!
NONO-NONOOO!!!
Come back!
Don't do this to me!
I'll never get to rest...

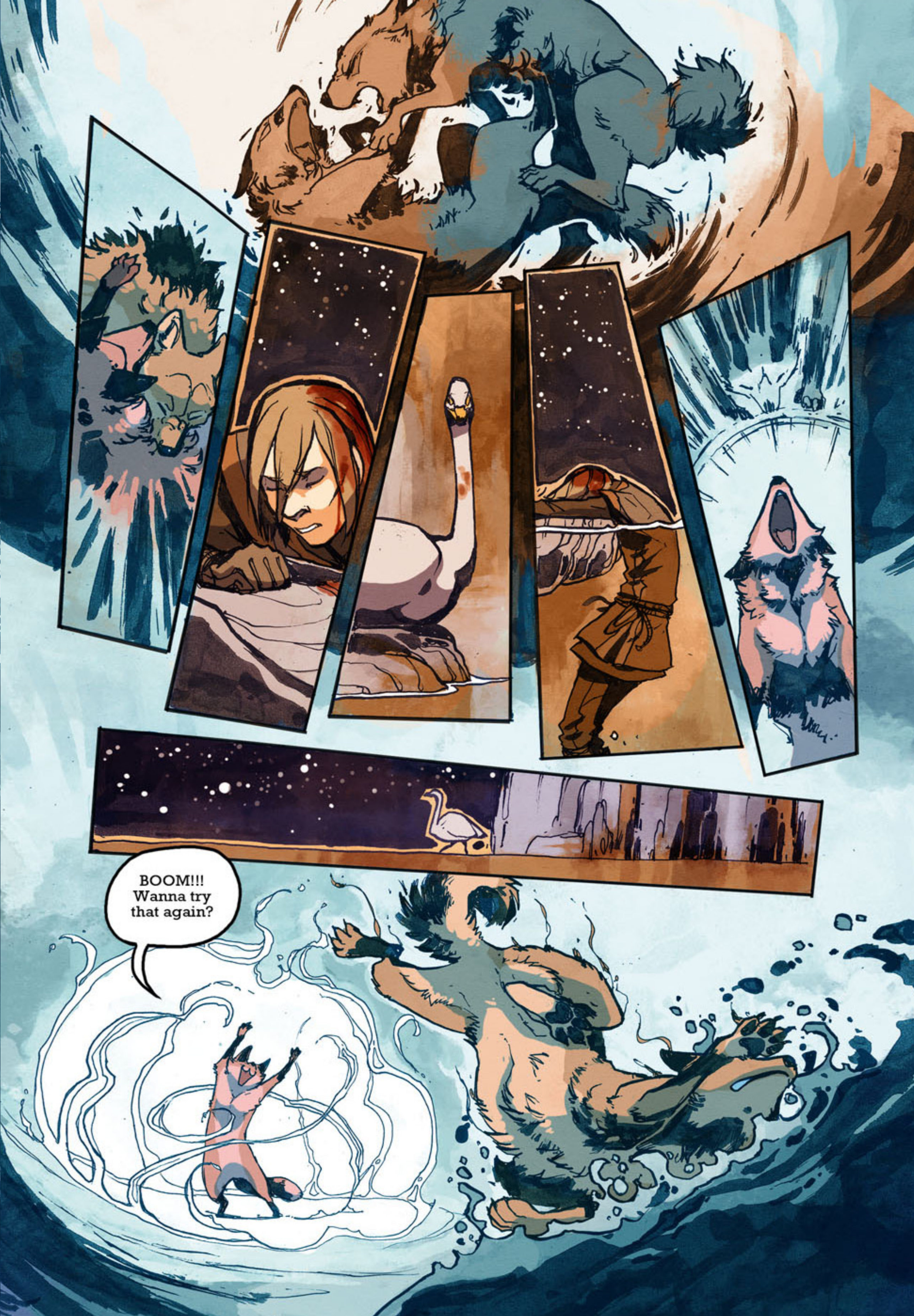

Cough!
waddle
waddle
Stop right there!
Come close and I'll carve your neck right back up again!
Don't even think that a broken knife will stop that somehow!
Do you really feel up for a second round so soon?
Umm...
...no.
Fine, be that way.

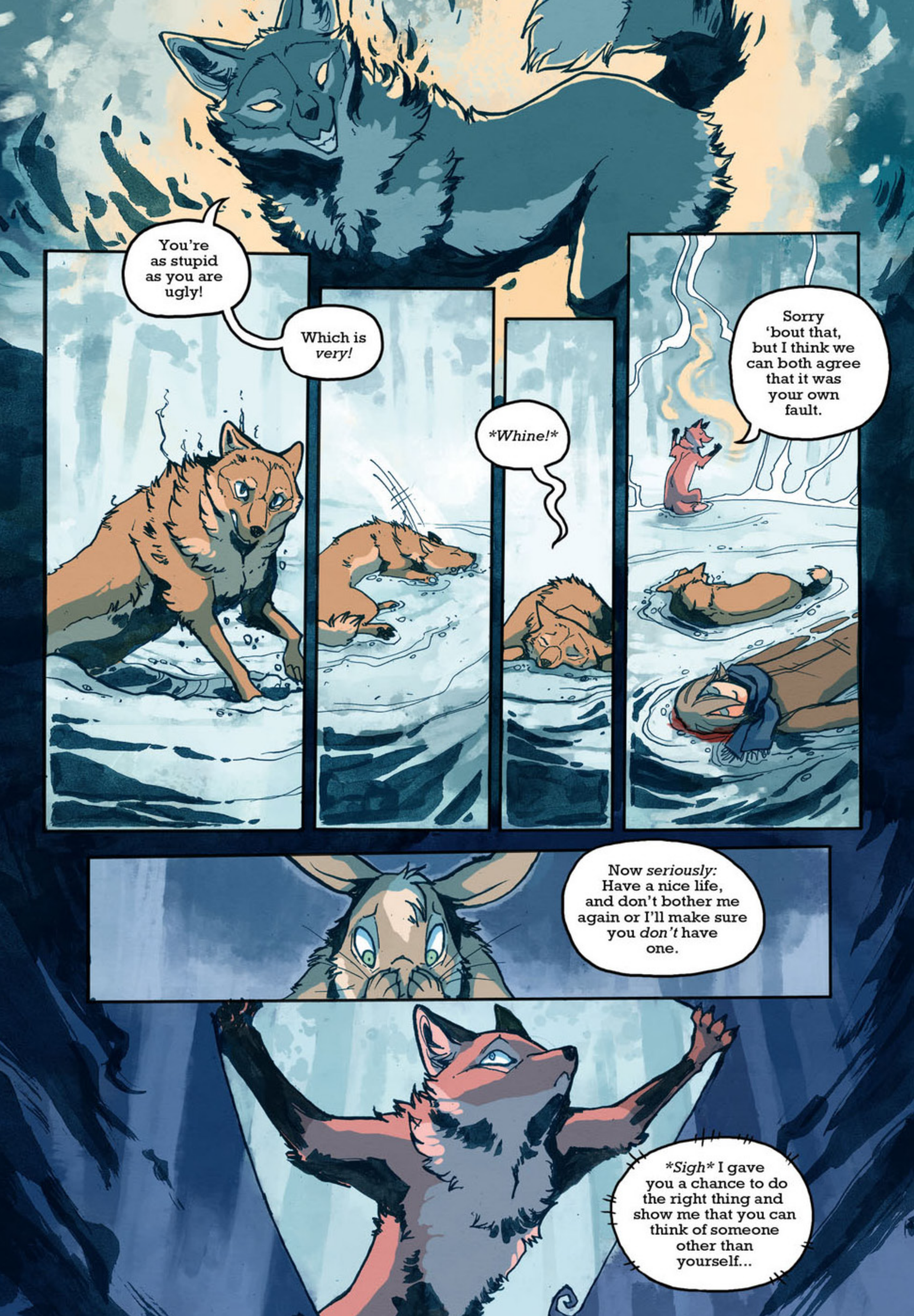

If you want to cool off in the water for a while, then *fine by me!*
Call when you're ready for me to come fetch you.
You can't go anywhere else.
HEY!
Spirit-animals!?
Is anyone up there!??
Get me out of this place!
HELLO!?!
Ynnh!
Villeee...

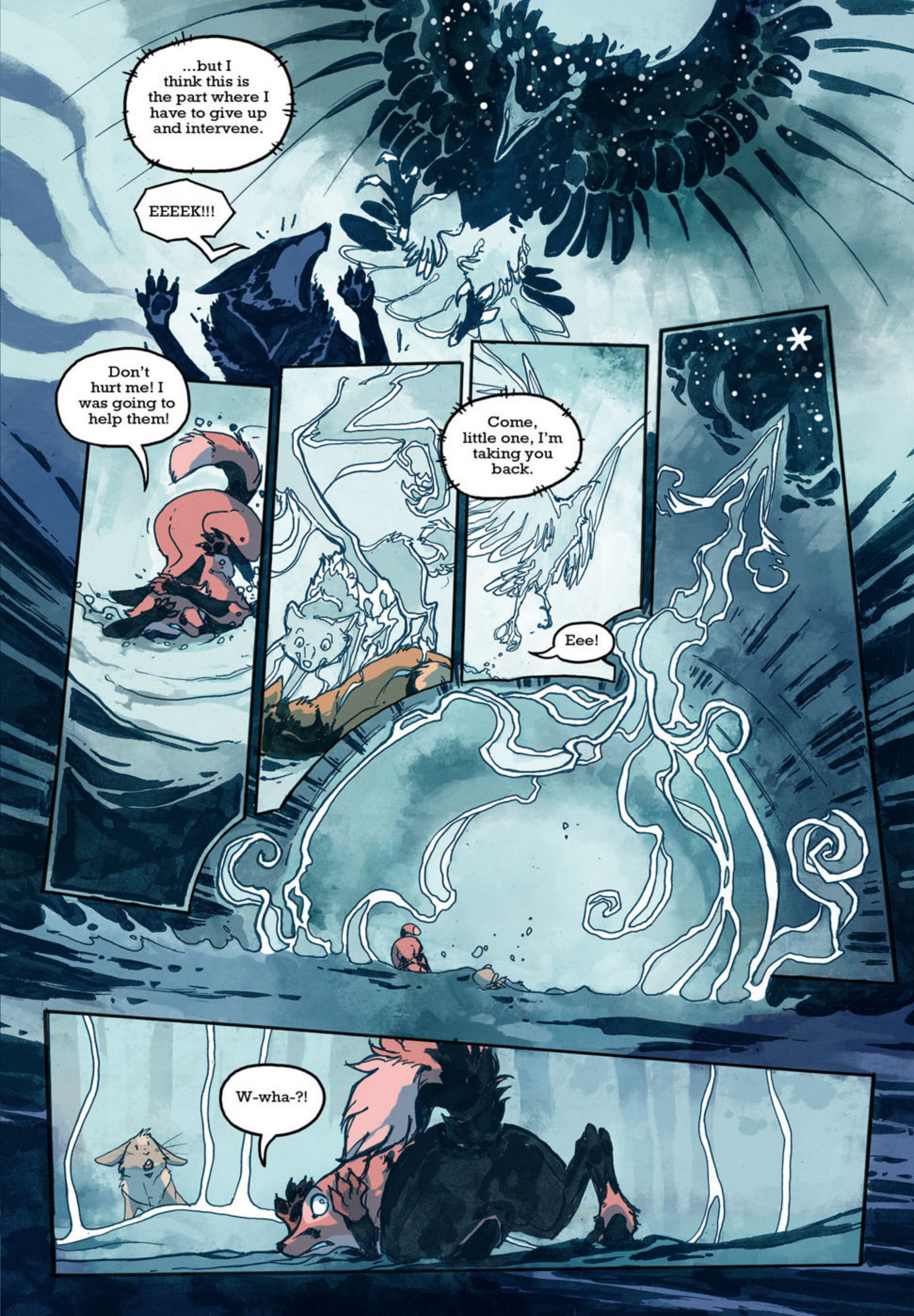

Yiip!
Hannu!
Can you hear me? *Wake up!*
Trying to wake up a soulless body is pretty dumb.
Just saying.
Well go *get* his soul!
Umm, how about *no?*
That would be kind of pointless.
I *could* go get his soul here...
...but it would just escape again as soon as I lift this last part of my stasis spell.
No it wouldn't!
Yes it would. I'm afraid his body broke.

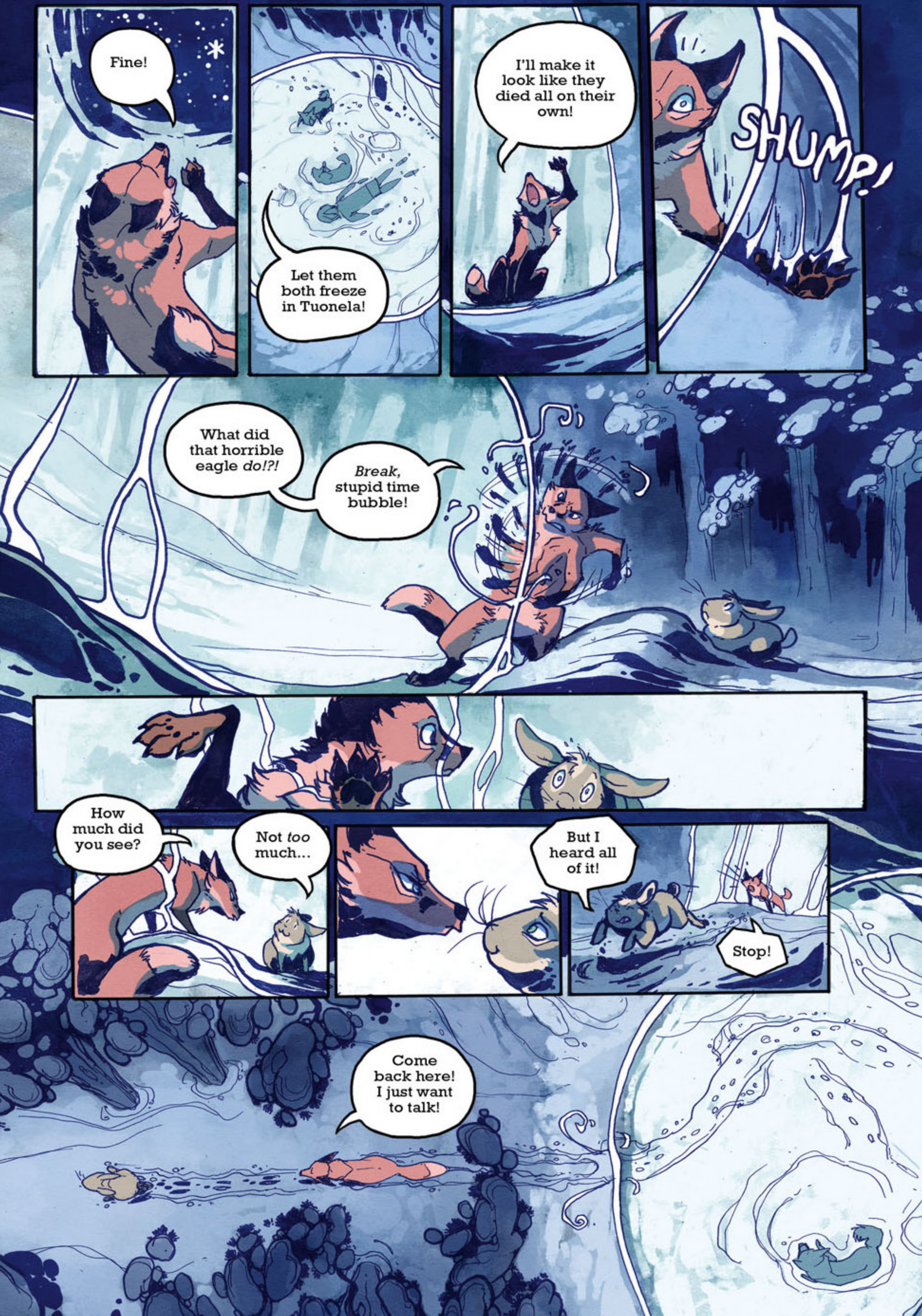

...Wha-?
Yeah, sorry.
There's kind of like a hole in his head right now.
I guess he must have hit it when you two fell down the cliffs.
?
So not my fault.
He *is* still alive, but won't be for long once I let your time flow again.
B-but fix him then! I know you can!
Nnnoo, someone could notice and find out what happened! Then this would have all been in vain!
But *you'll* be fine! Have a nice life!
Don't!

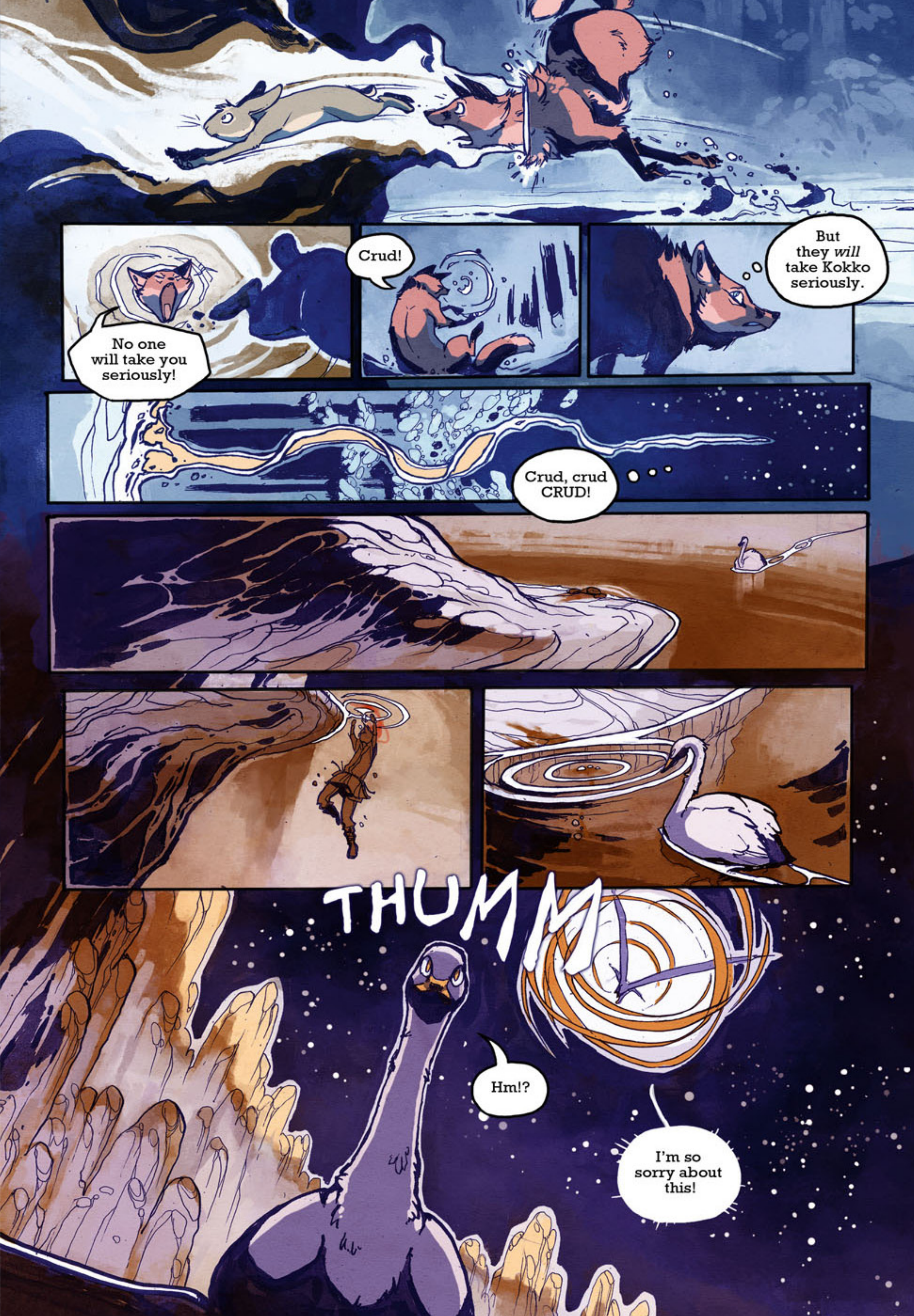

This'll be over soon.
I said STOP!!!

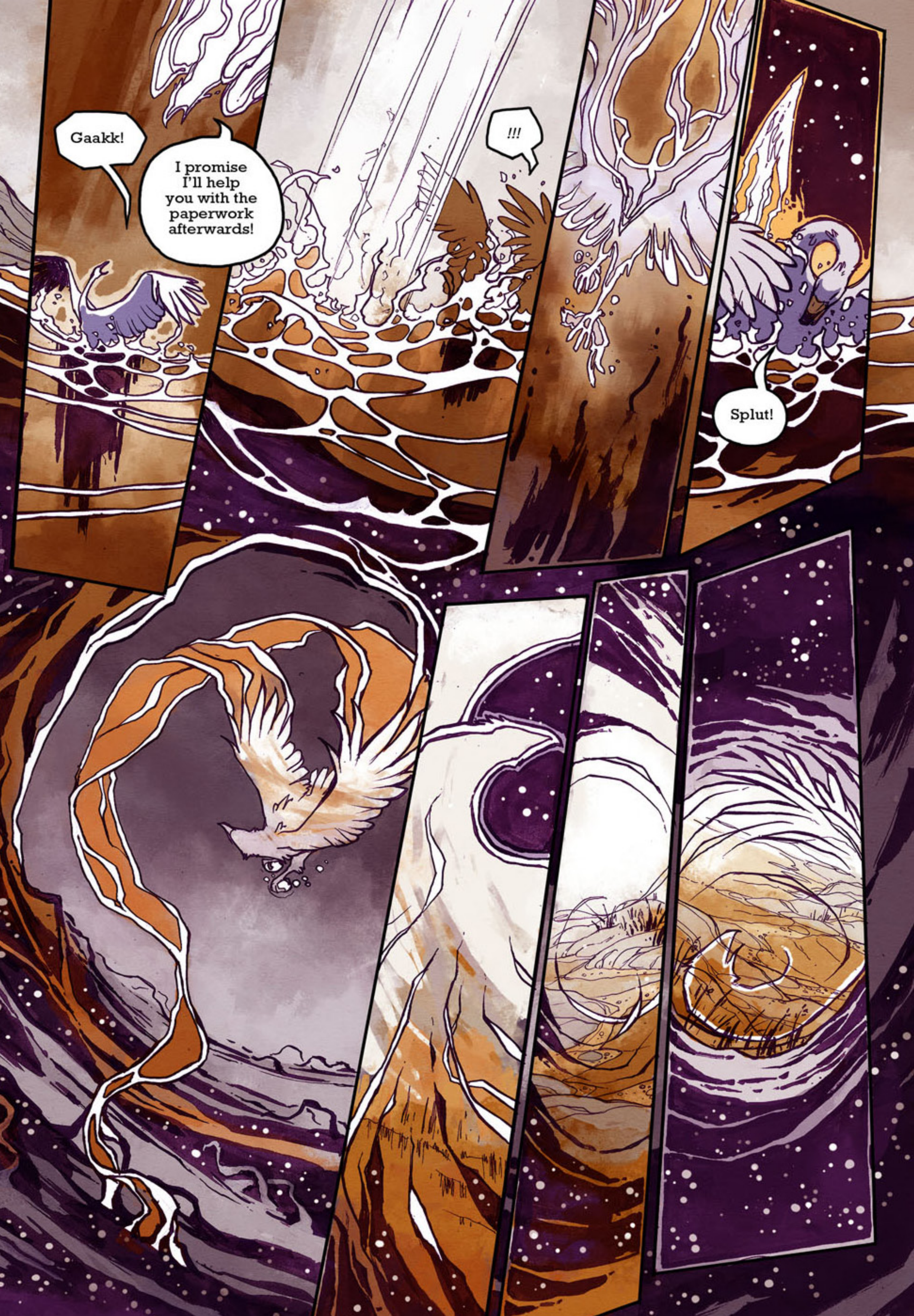

BOOM!!!
Wanna try
that again?

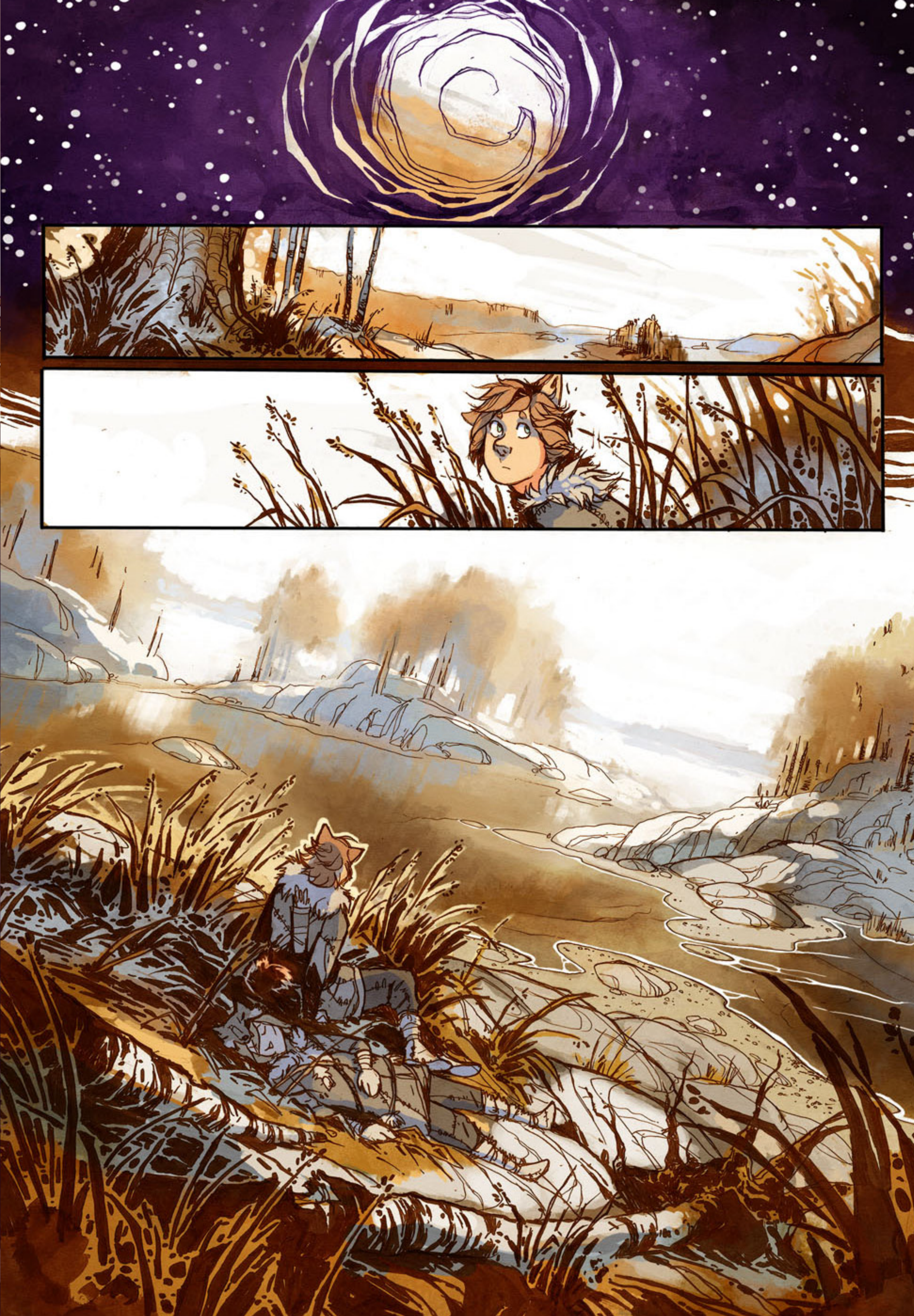

You're as stupid as you are ugly!
Which is *very!*
Whine!
Sorry 'bout that, but I think we can both agree that it was your own fault.
Now *seriously:* Have a nice life, and don't bother me again or I'll make sure you *don't* have one.
Sigh I gave you a chance to do the right thing and show me that you can think of someone other than yourself...


...but I think this is the part where I have to give up and intervene.
EEEEK!!!
Don't hurt me! I was going to help them!
Come, little one, I'm taking you back.
Eee!
W-wha-?!

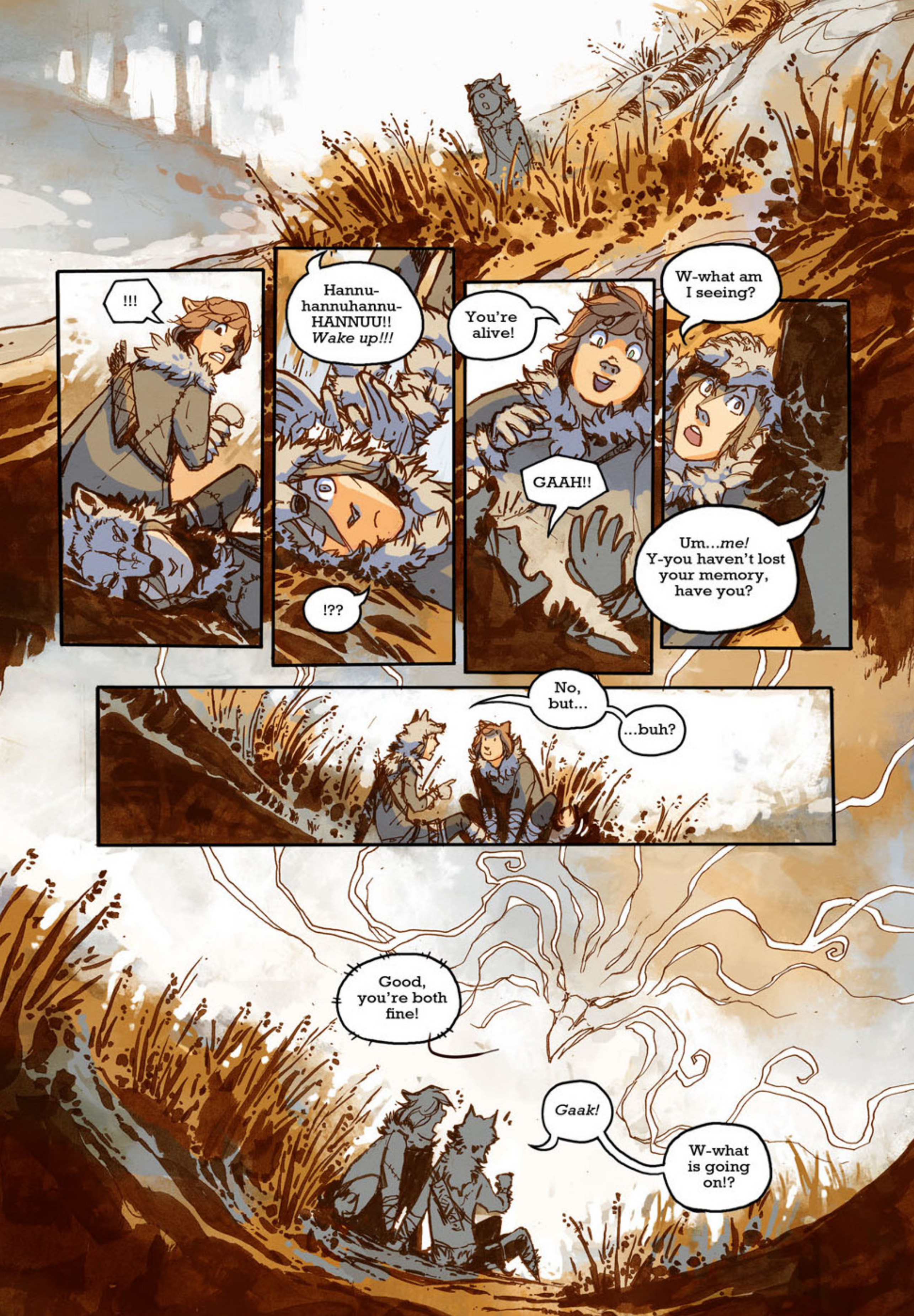

Fine!
Let them both freeze in Tuonela!
I'll make it look like they died all on their own!
SHUMP!
What did that horrible eagle *do!?!*
Break, stupid time bubble!
How much did you see?
Not *too* much...
But I heard all of it!
Stop!
Come back here! I just want to talk!

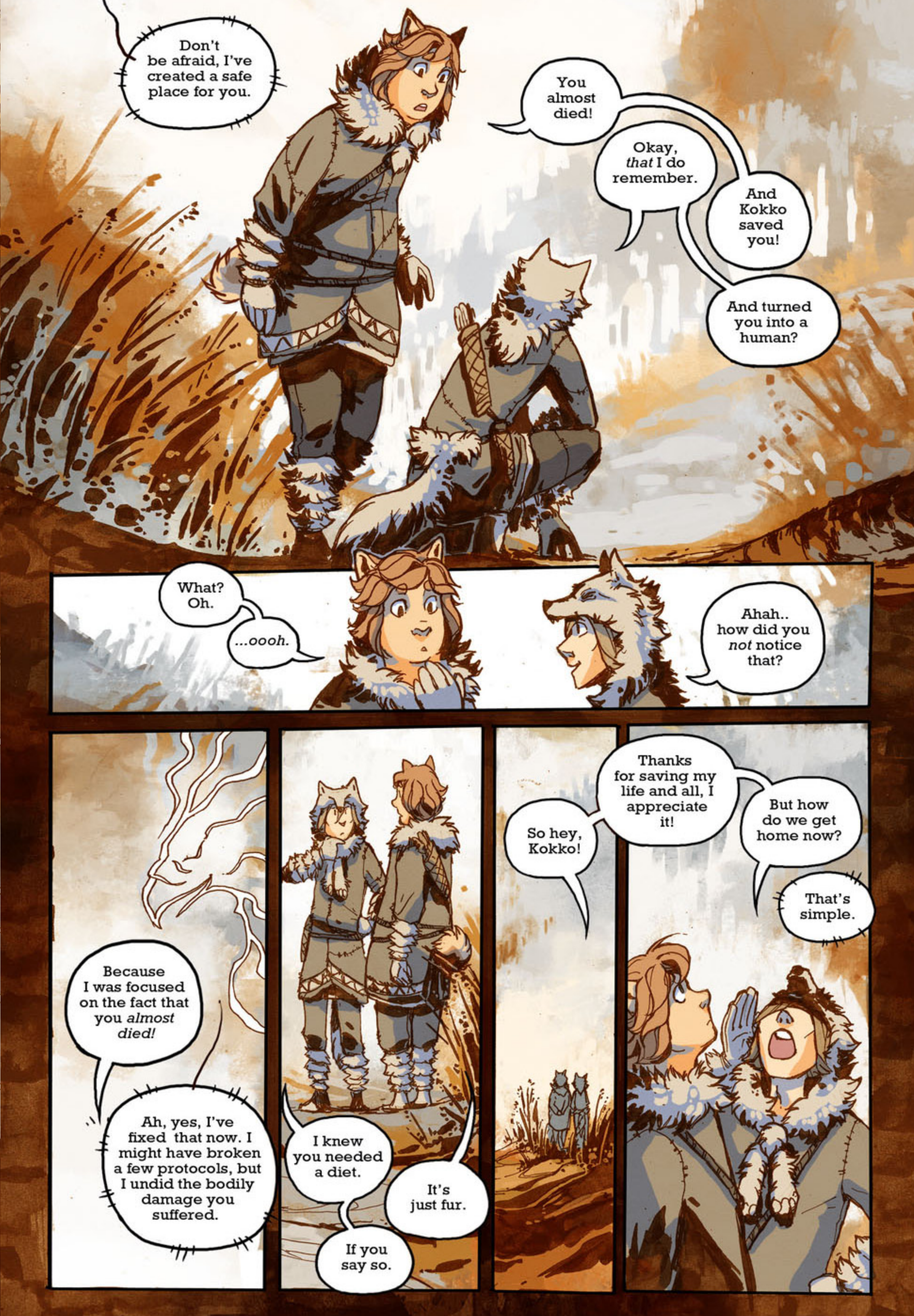

No one will take you seriously!
Crud!
But they *will* take Kokko seriously.
Crud, crud CRUD!
THUMM
Hm!?
I'm so sorry about this!

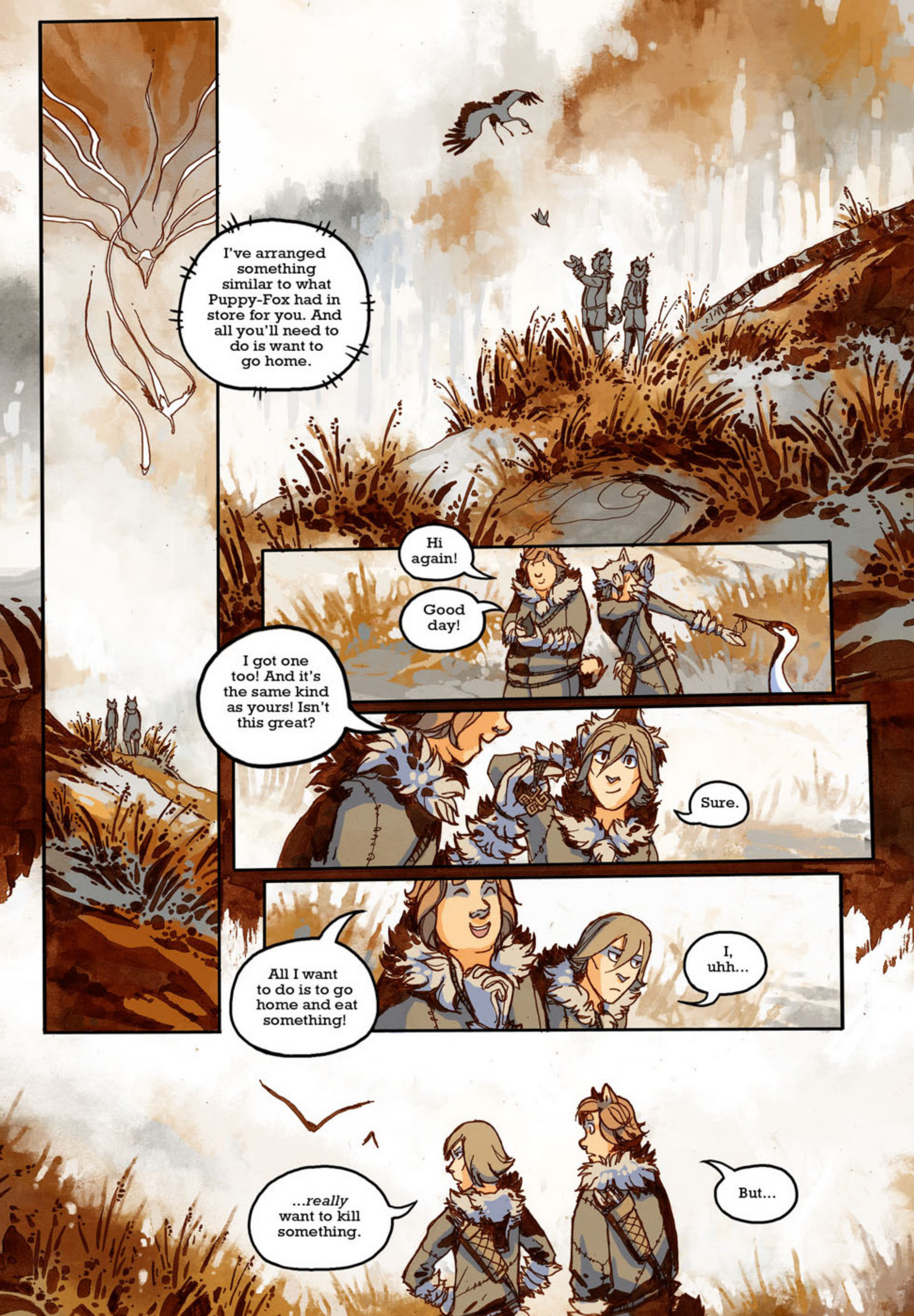

Gaakk!
I promise I'll help you with the paperwork afterwards!
!!!
Splut!

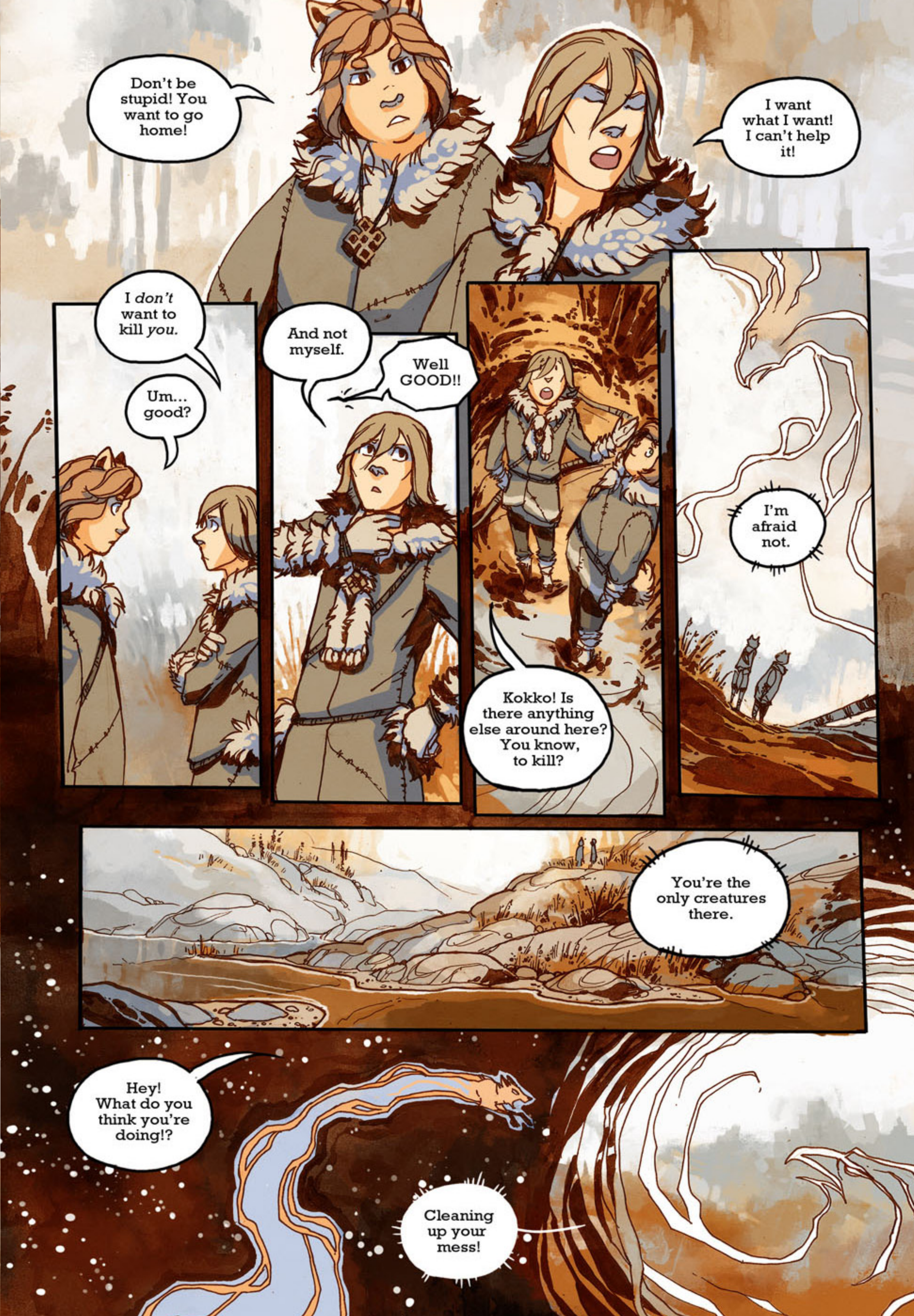


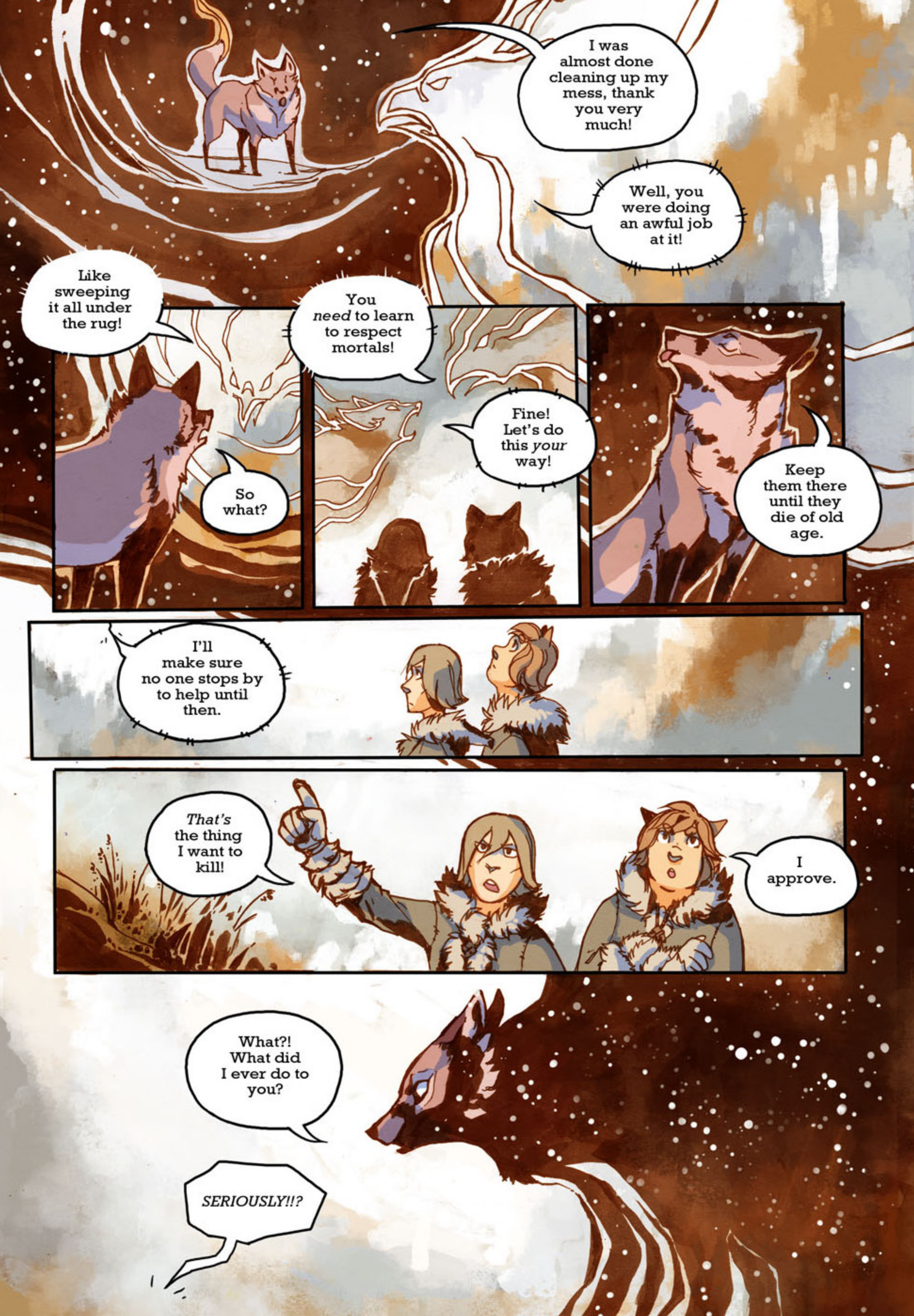
IIII A Redtail's Dream IIII

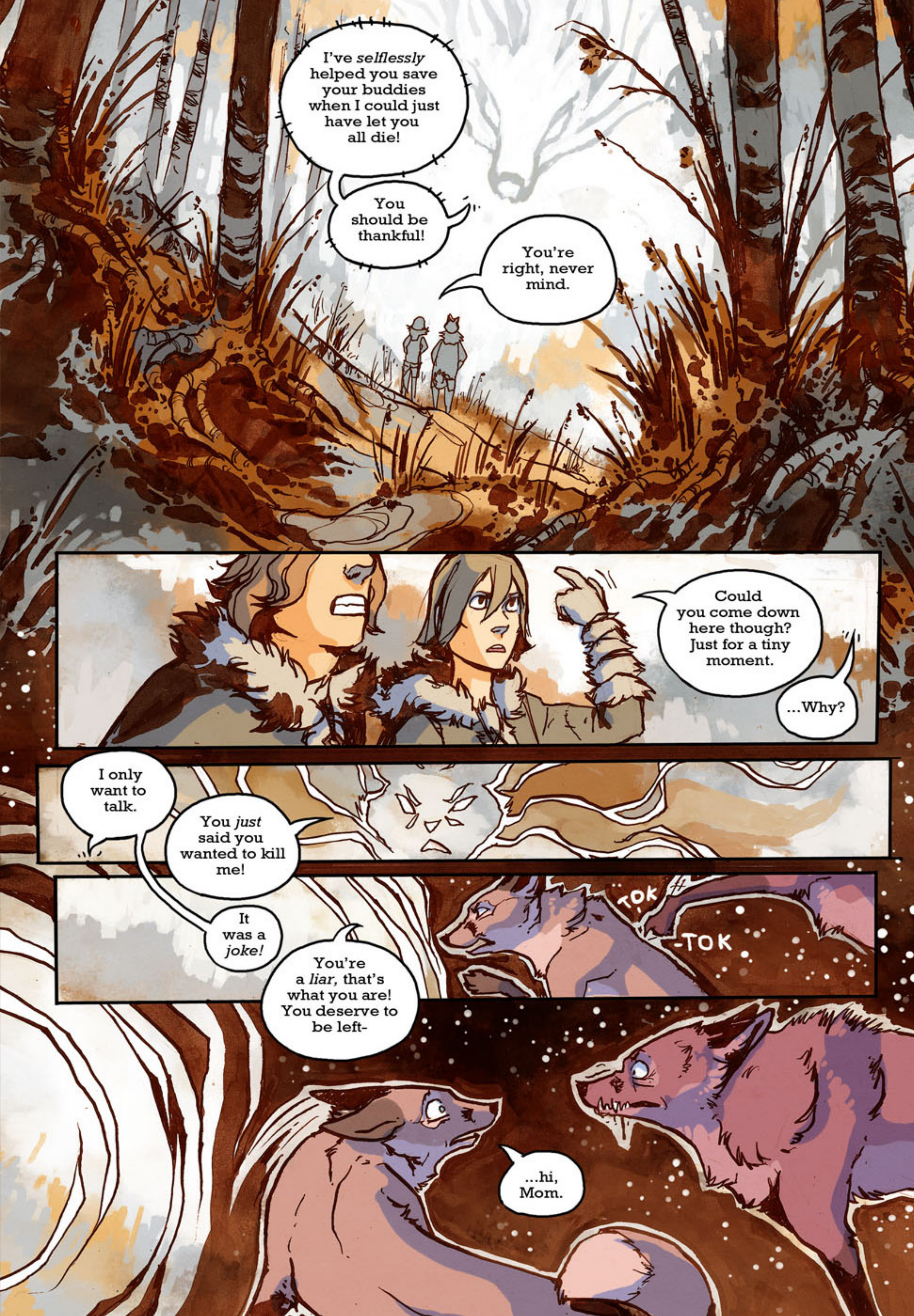

!!!
Hannu-hannuhannu-HANNUU!! *Wake up!!!*
!??
You're alive!
GAAH!!
W-what am I seeing?
Um...*me!* Y-you haven't lost your memory, have you?
No, but...
...buh?
Good, you're both fine!
Gaak!
W-what is going on!?

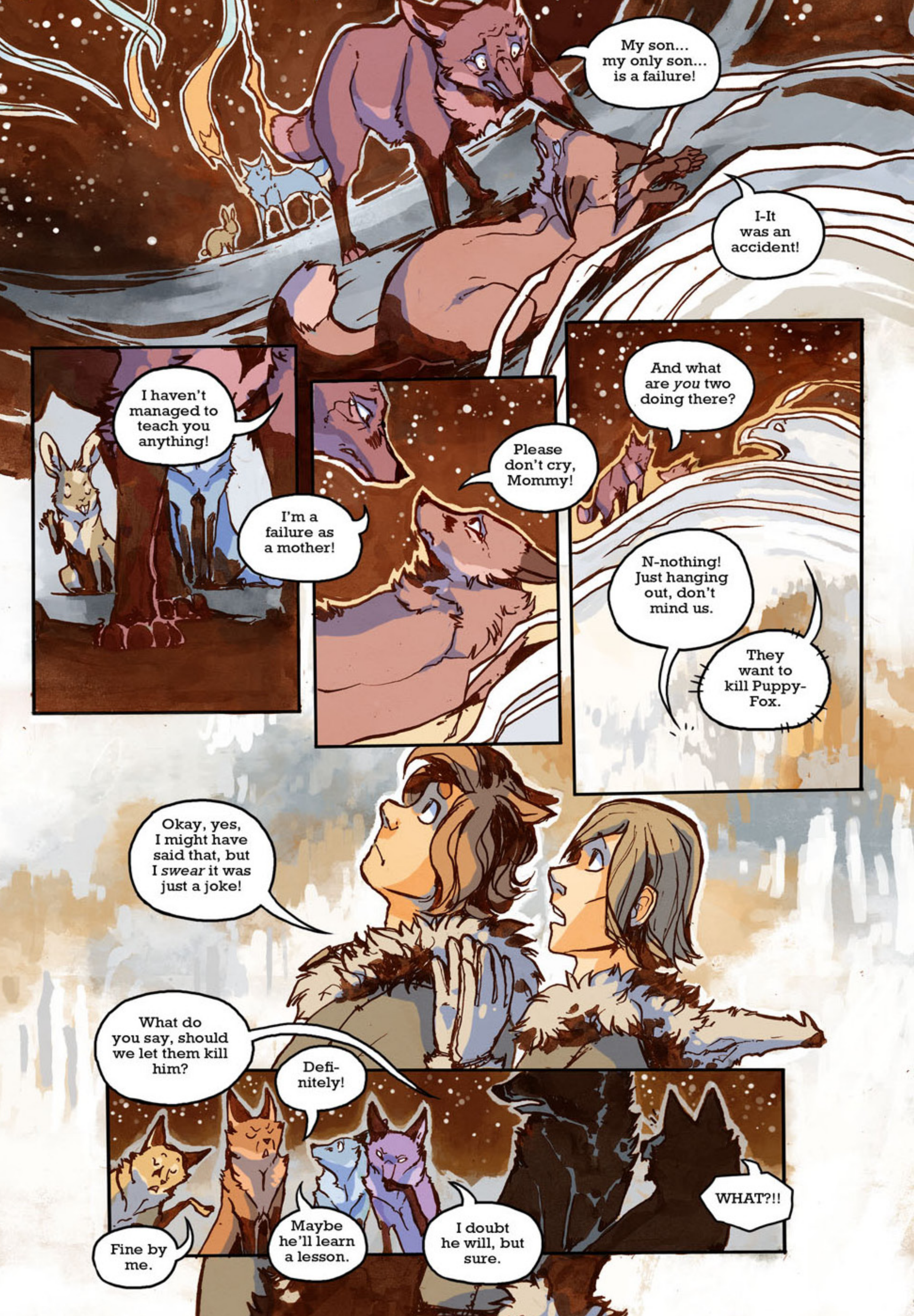

Don't be afraid, I've created a safe place for you.
You almost died!
Okay, *that* I do remember.
And Kokko saved you!
And turned you into a human?
What? Oh.
...oooh.
Ahah.. how did you *not* notice that?
Because I was focused on the fact that you *almost died!*
Ah, yes, I've fixed that now. I might have broken a few protocols, but I undid the bodily damage you suffered.
I knew you needed a diet.
It's just fur.
If you say so.
So hey, Kokko!
Thanks for saving my life and all, I appreciate it!
But how do we get home now?
That's simple.

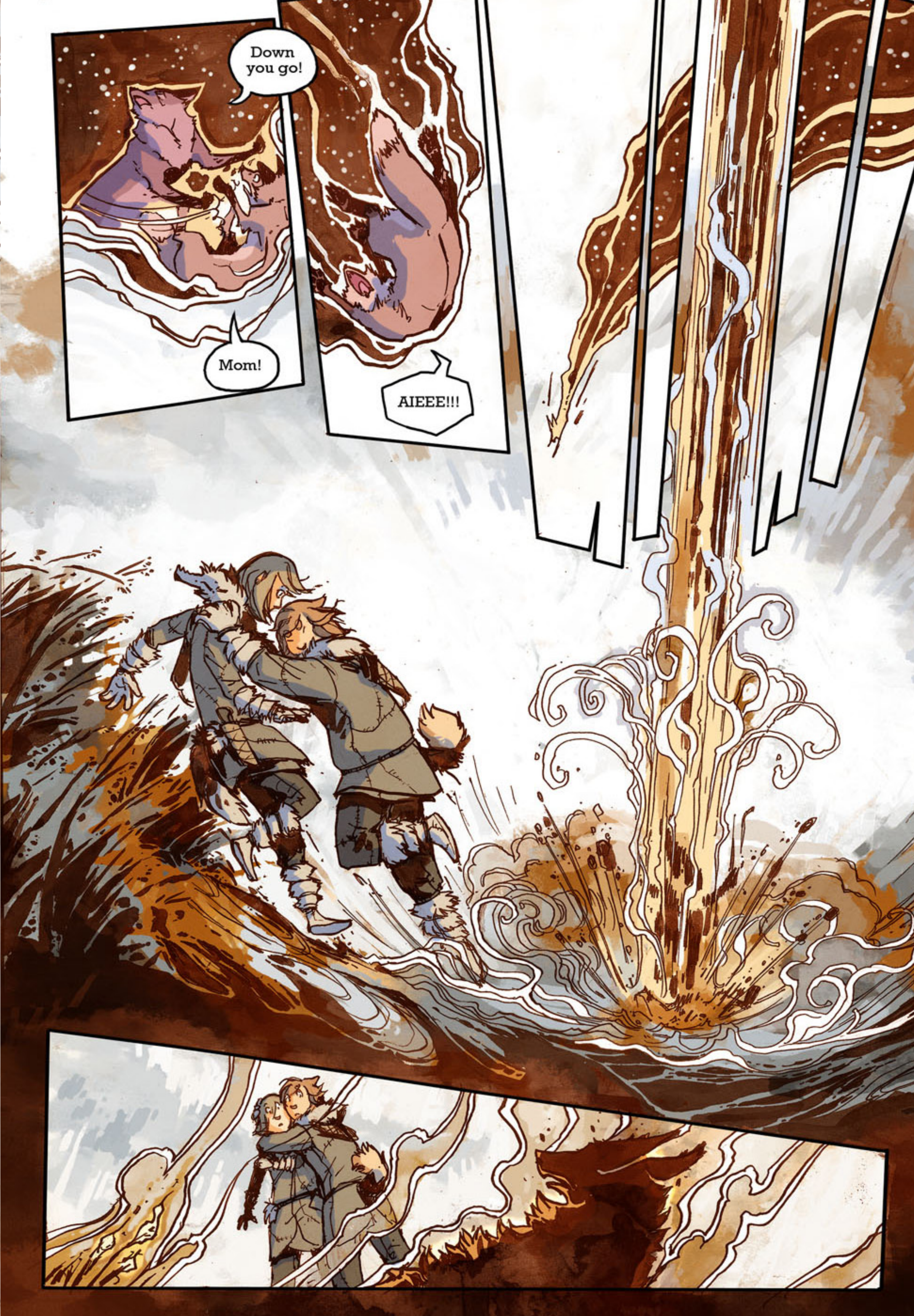

I've arranged something similar to what Puppy-Fox had in store for you. And all you'll need to do is want to go home.
Hi again!
Good day!
I got one too! And it's the same kind as yours! Isn't this great?
Sure.
All I want to do is to go home and eat something!
I, uhh...
...*really* want to kill something.
But...

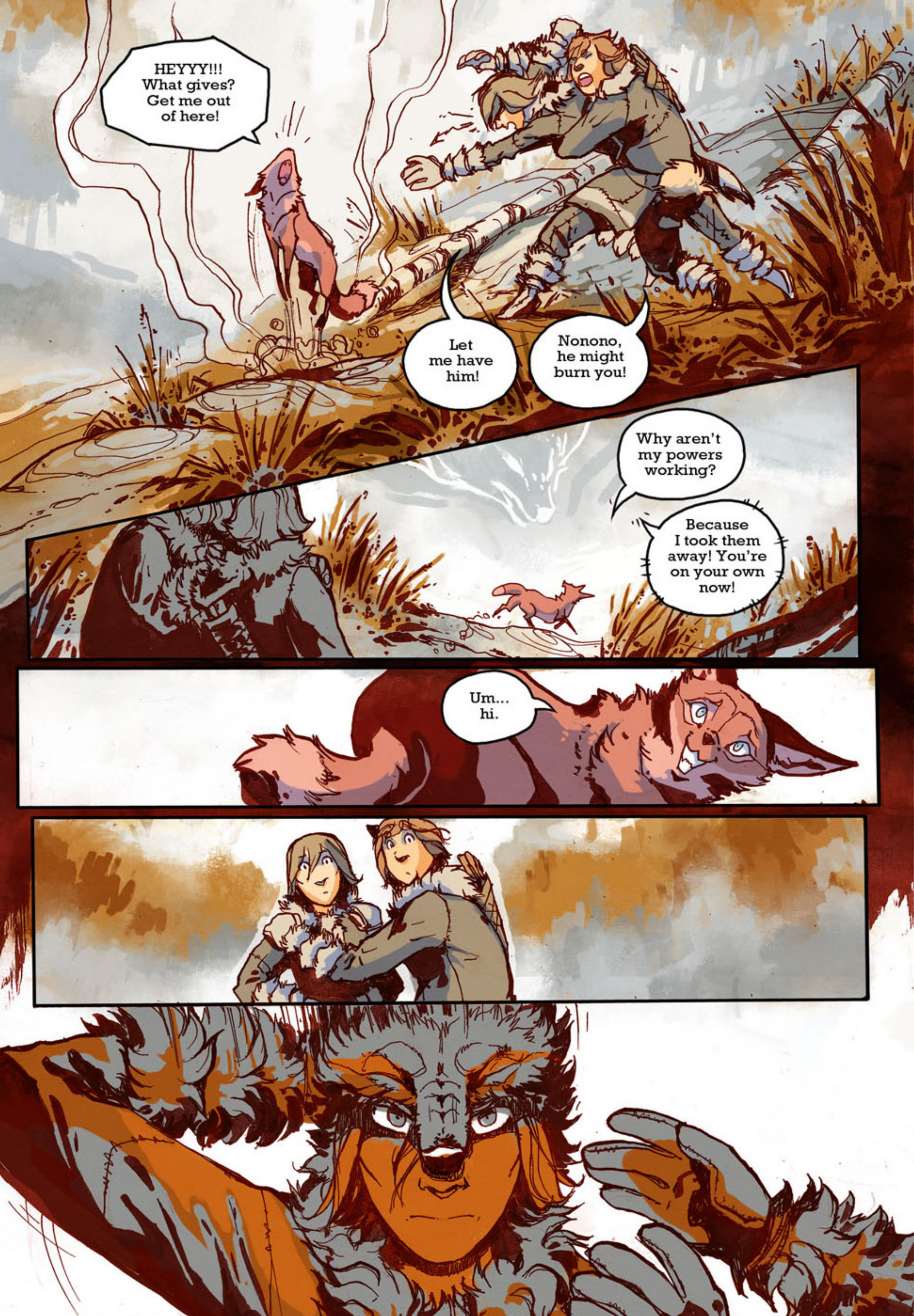

Don't be stupid! You want to go home!
I want what I want! I can't help it!
I *don't* want to kill *you.*
Um... good?
And not myself.
Well GOOD!!
Kokko! Is there anything else around here? You know, to kill?
I'm afraid not.
You're the only creatures there.
Hey! What do you think you're doing!?
Cleaning up your mess!

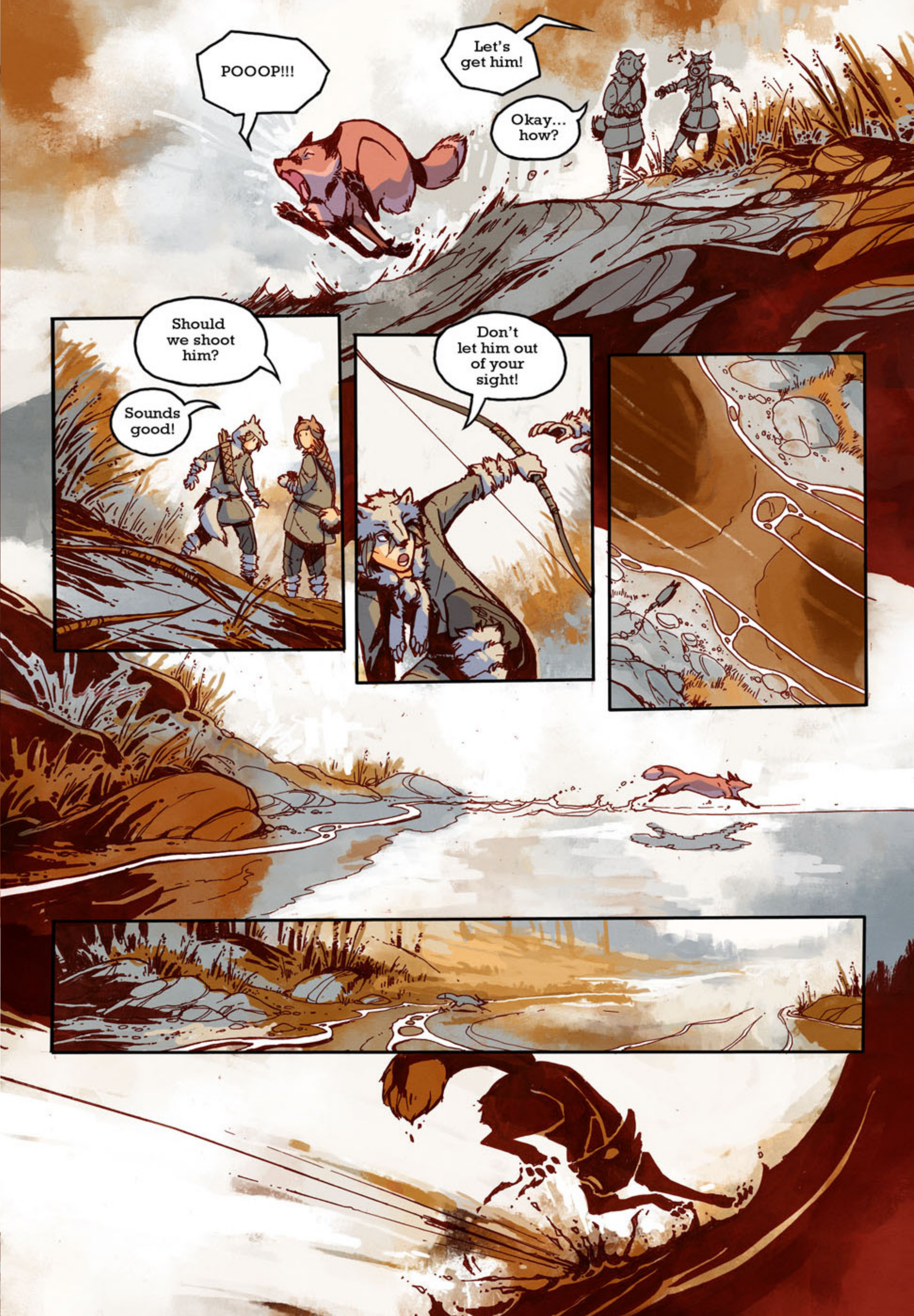

I was almost done cleaning up my mess, thank you very much!
Well, you were doing an awful job at it!
Like sweeping it all under the rug!
So what?
You *need* to learn to respect mortals!
Fine! Let's do this *your* way!
Keep them there until they die of old age.
I'll make sure no one stops by to help until then.
That's the thing I want to kill!
I approve.
What?! What did I ever do to you?
SERIOUSLY!!?

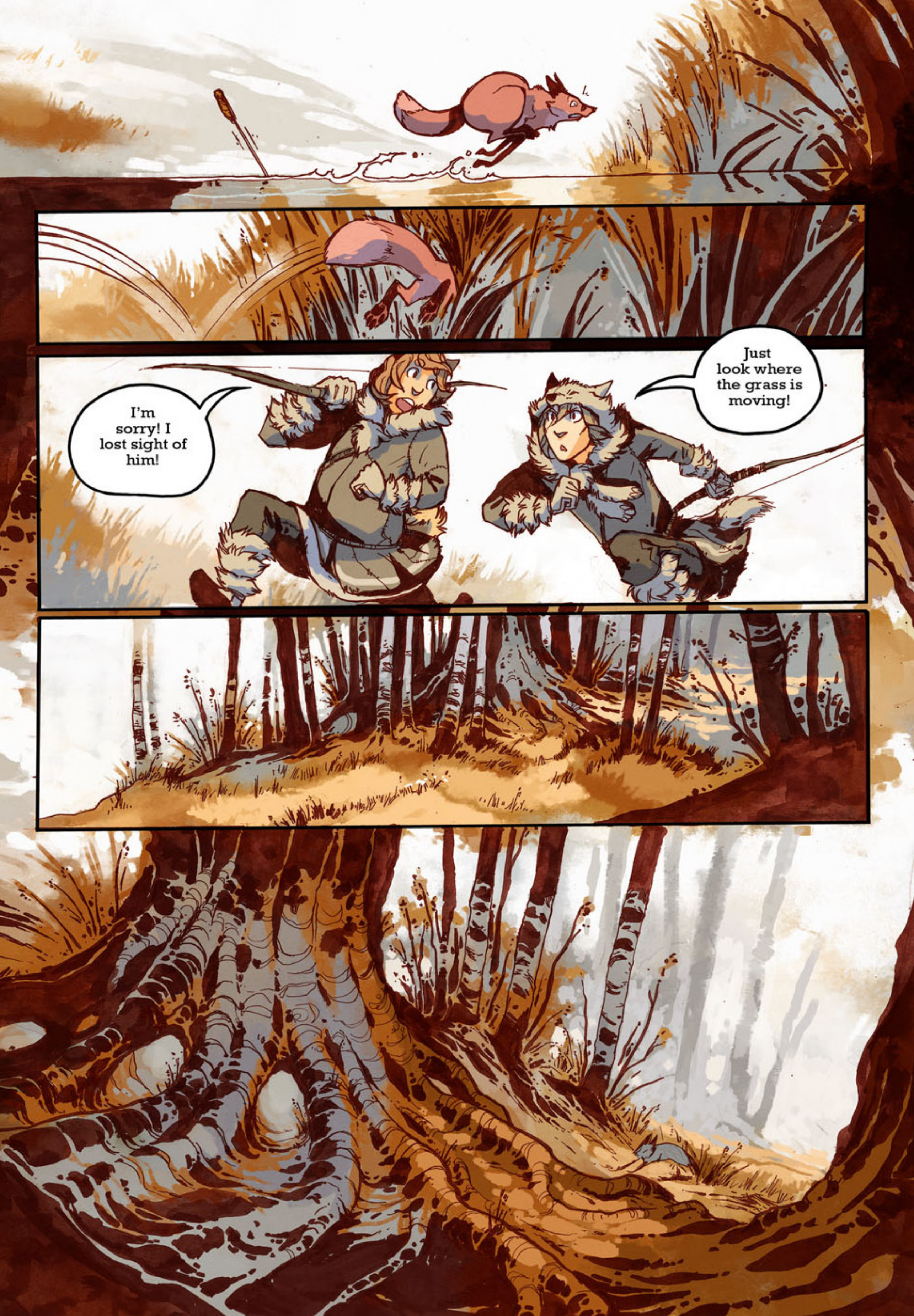

I've *selflessly* helped you save your buddies when I could just have let you all die!
You should be thankful!
You're right, never mind.
Could you come down here though? Just for a tiny moment.
...Why?
I only want to talk.
You *just* said you wanted to kill me!
It was a *joke!*
TOK
-TOK
You're a *liar,* that's what you are! You deserve to be left-
...hi, Mom.

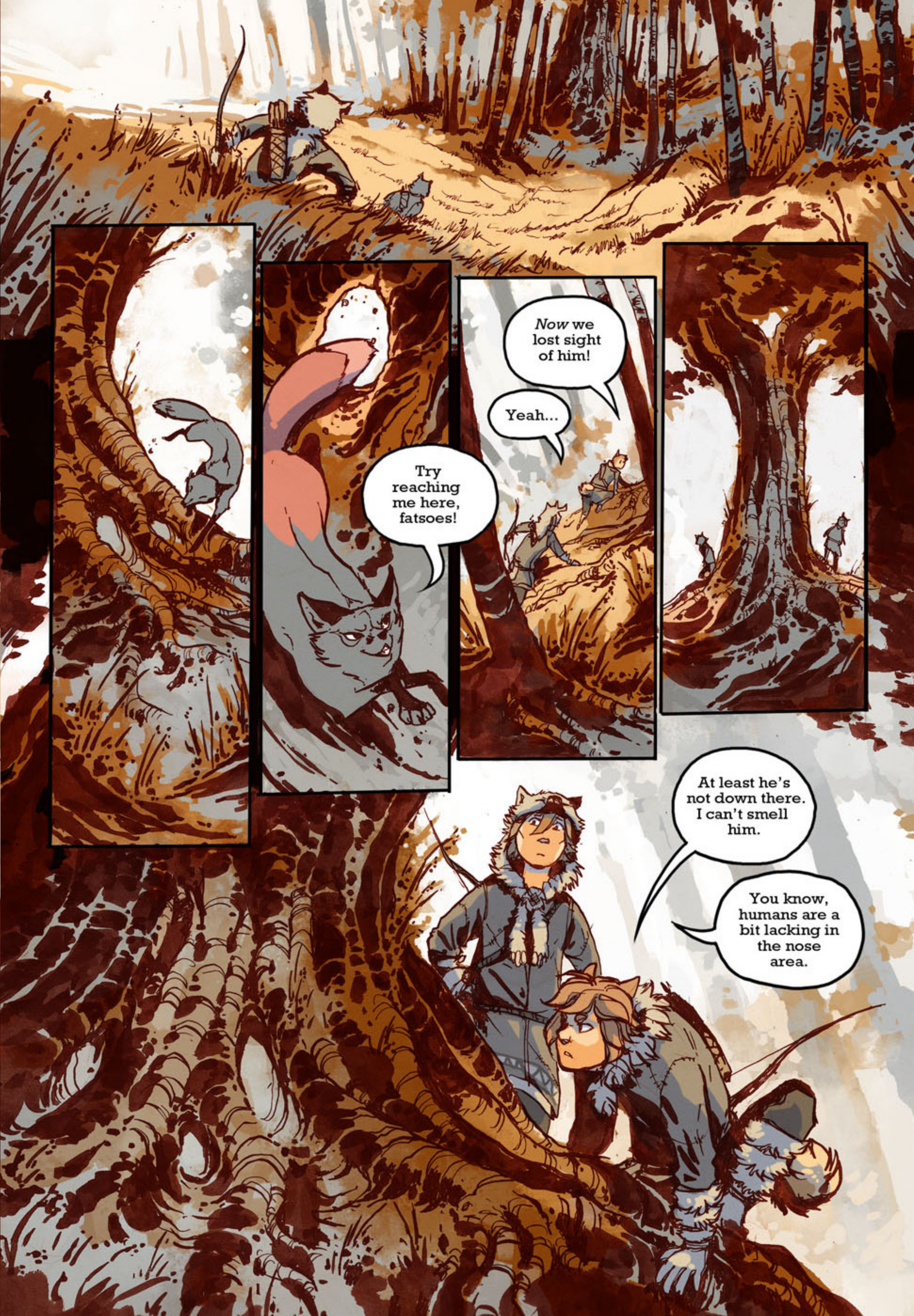

My son... my only son... is a failure!
I-It was an accident!
I haven't managed to teach you anything!
I'm a failure as a mother!
Please don't cry, Mommy!
And what are *you* two doing there?
N-nothing! Just hanging out, don't mind us.
They want to kill Puppy-Fox.
Okay, yes, I might have said that, but I *swear* it was just a joke!
What do you say, should we let them kill him?
Defi-nitely!
Fine by me.
Maybe he'll learn a lesson.
I doubt he will, but sure.
WHAT?!!

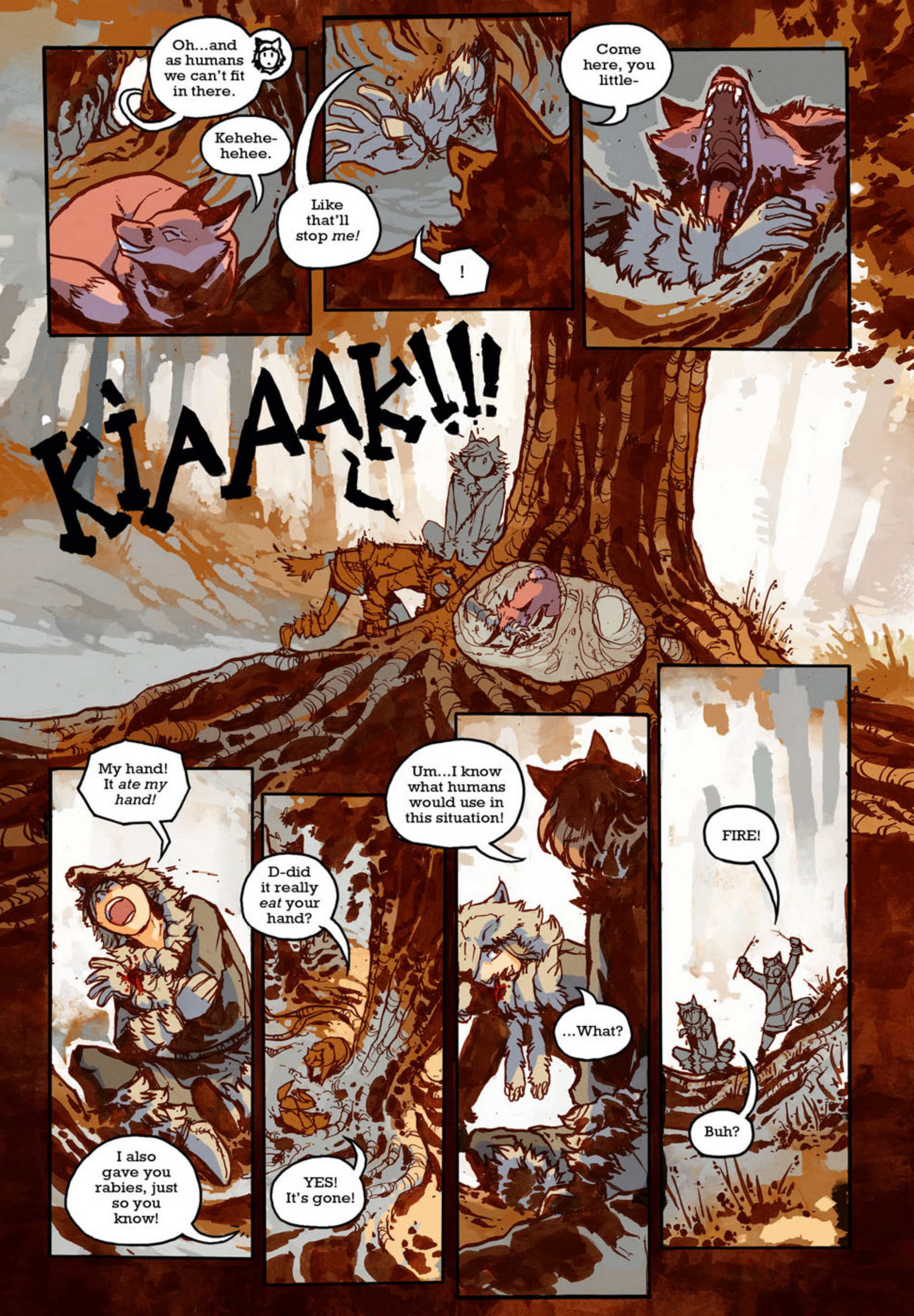

Down you go!
Mom!
AIEEE!!!

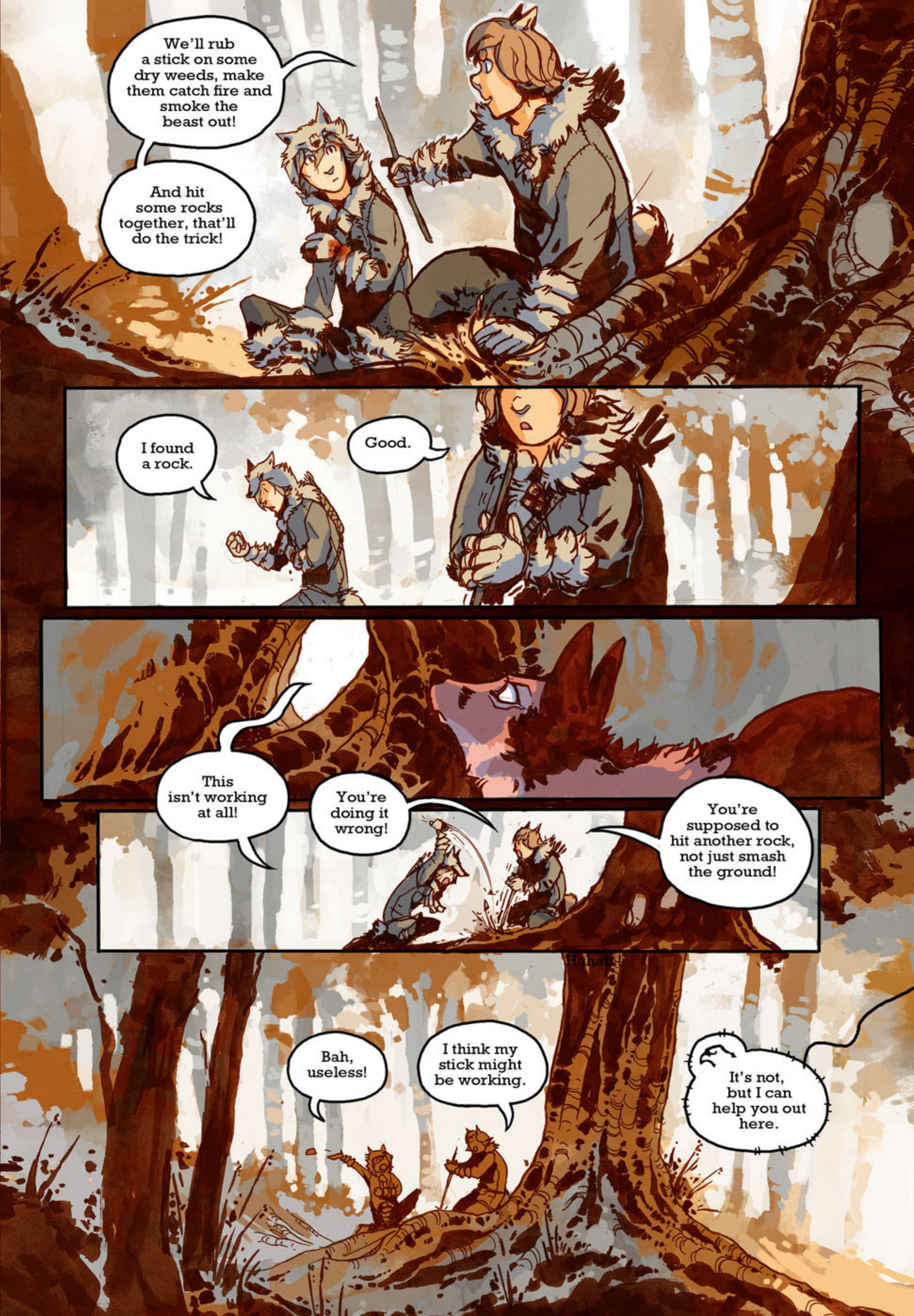

HEYYY!!! What gives? Get me out of here!
Let me have him!
Nonono, he might burn you!
Why aren't my powers working?
Because I took them away! You're on your own now!
Um... hi.

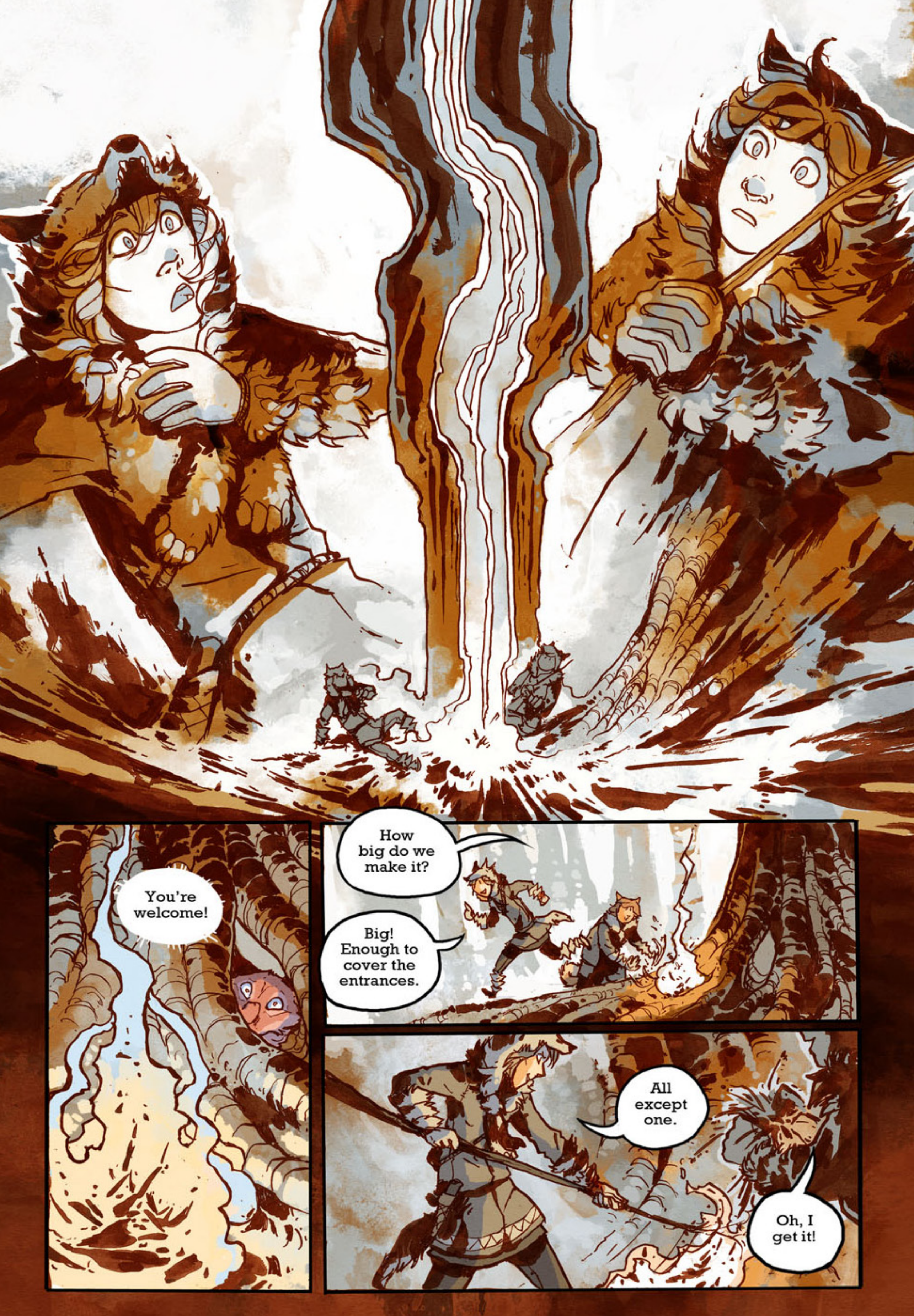

POOOP!!!
Let's get him!
Okay... how?
Should we shoot him?
Sounds good!
Don't let him out of your sight!

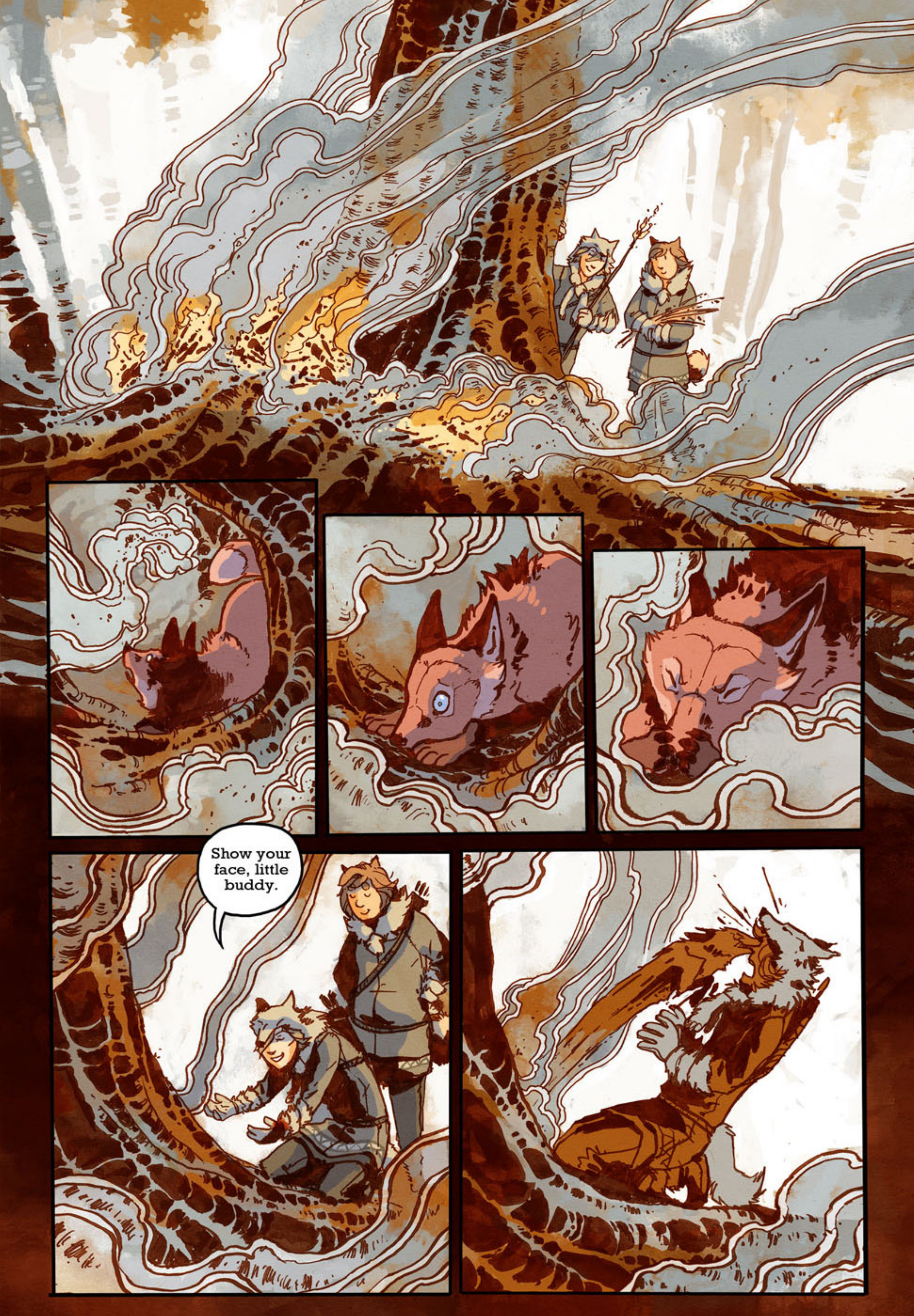

I'm sorry! I lost sight of him!
Just look where the grass is moving!

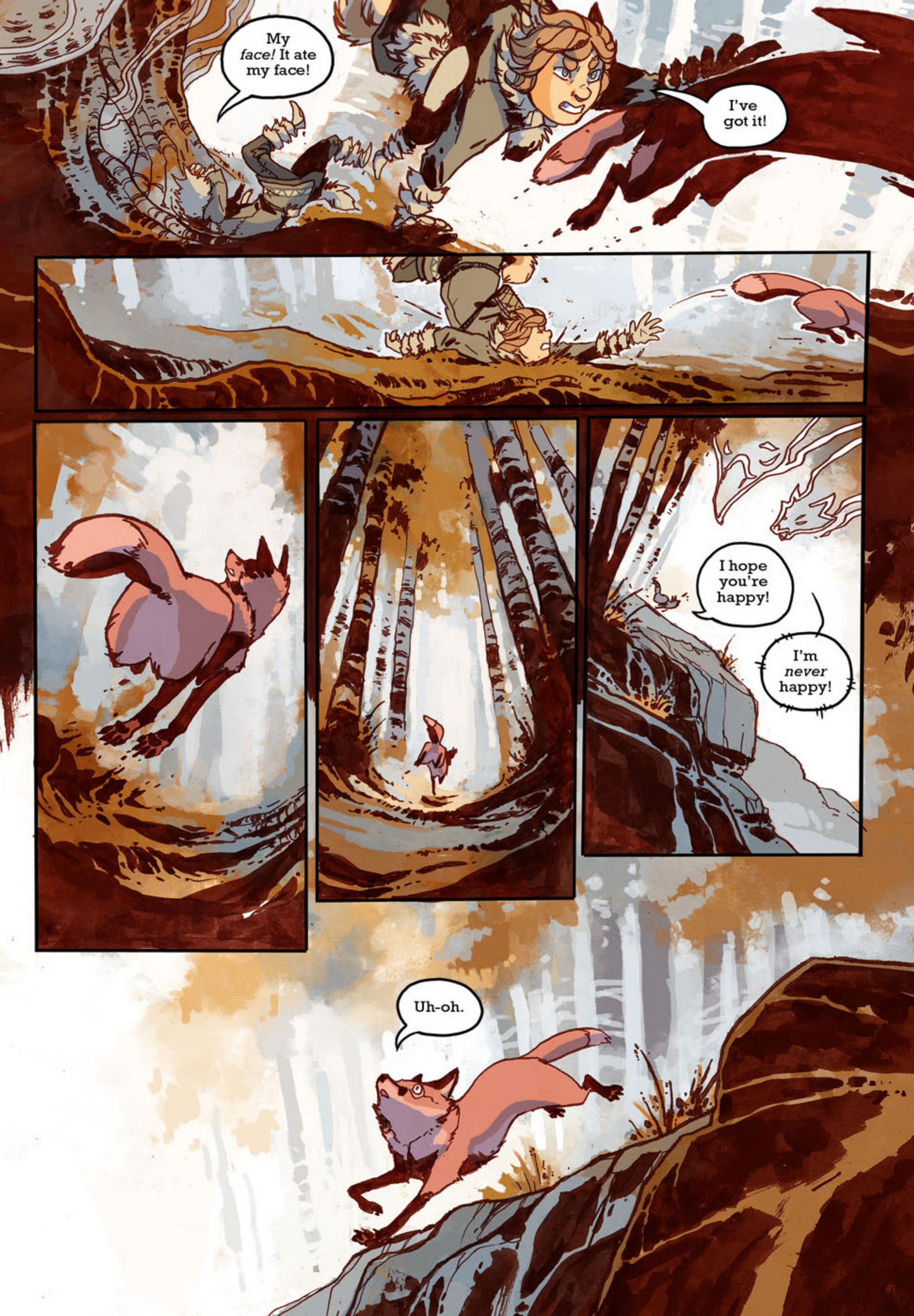

Try reaching me here, fatsoes!
Now we lost sight of him!
Yeah...
At least he's not down there. I can't smell him.
You know, humans are a bit lacking in the nose area.

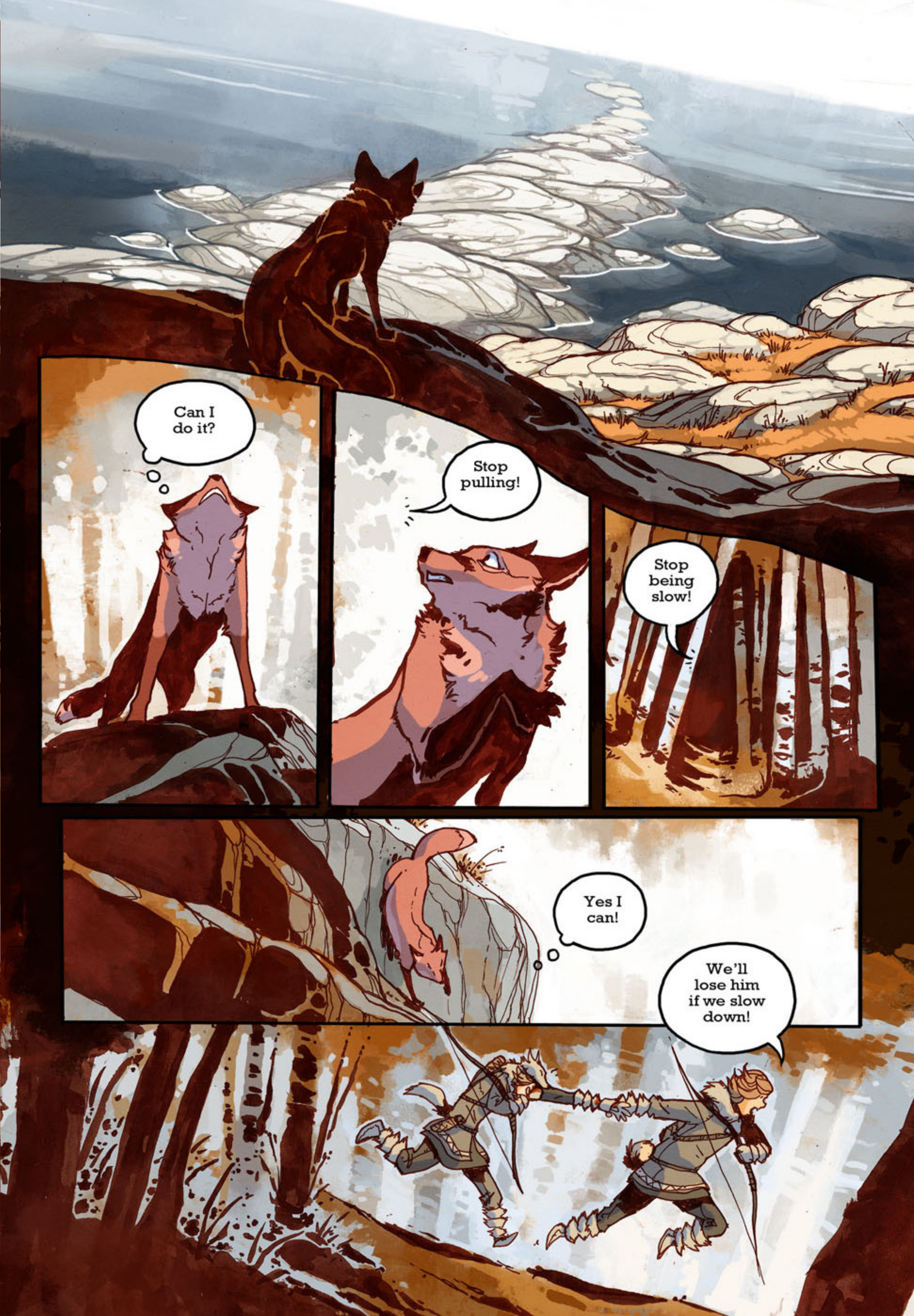

Oh...and as humans we can't fit in there.
Kehehe-hehee.
Like that'll stop *me!*
!
Come here, you little-
KIAAAK!!!
My hand! It *ate my hand!*
I also gave you rabies, just so you know!
D-did it really *eat* your hand?
YES! It's gone!
Um...I know what humans would use in this situation!
...What?
FIRE!
Buh?

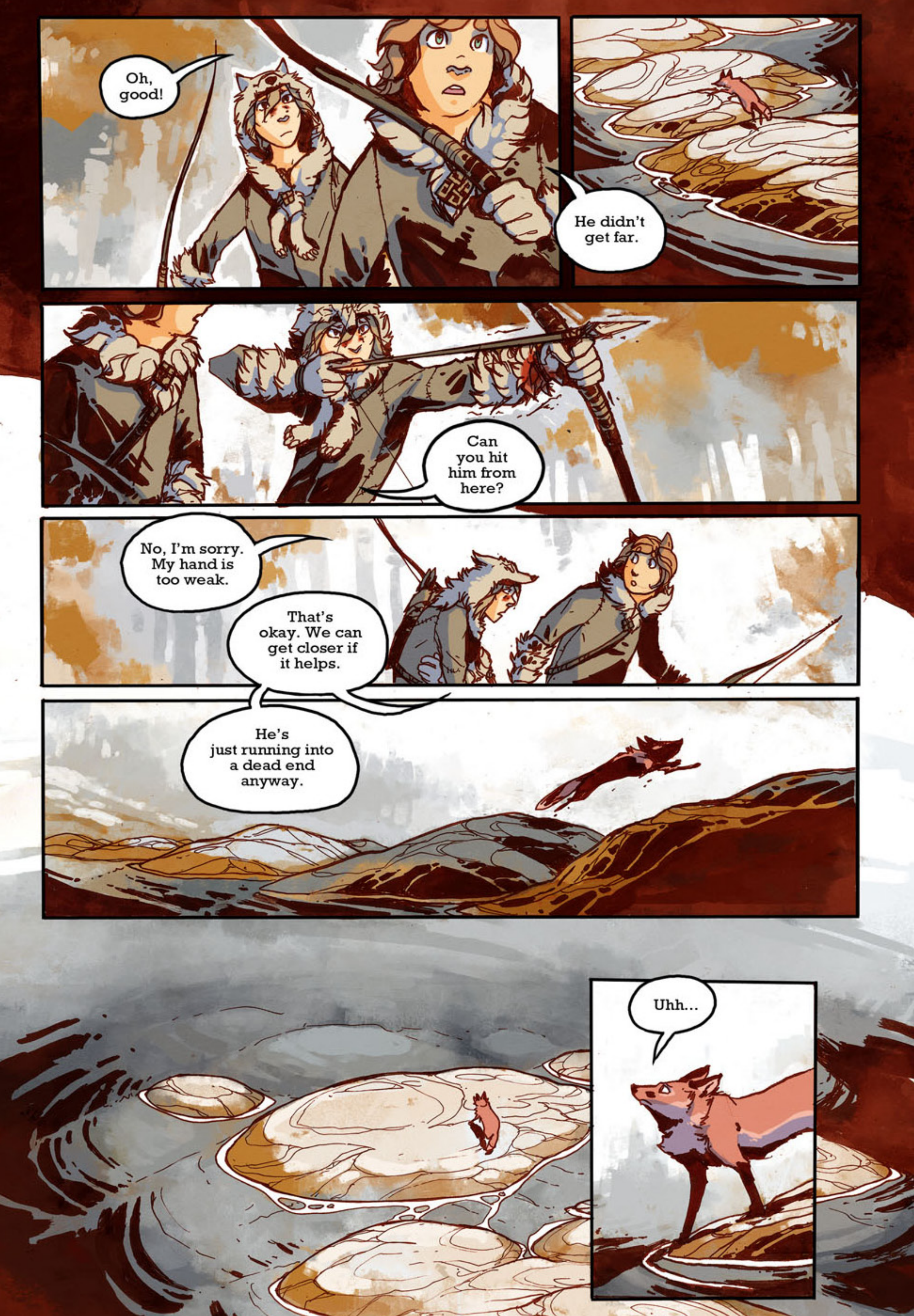

We'll rub a stick on some dry weeds, make them catch fire and smoke the beast out!
And hit some rocks together, that'll do the trick!
I found a rock.
Good.
This isn't working at all!
You're doing it wrong!
You're supposed to hit another rock, not just smash the ground!
Hahah!
Bah, useless!
I think my stick might be working.
It's not, but I can help you out here.

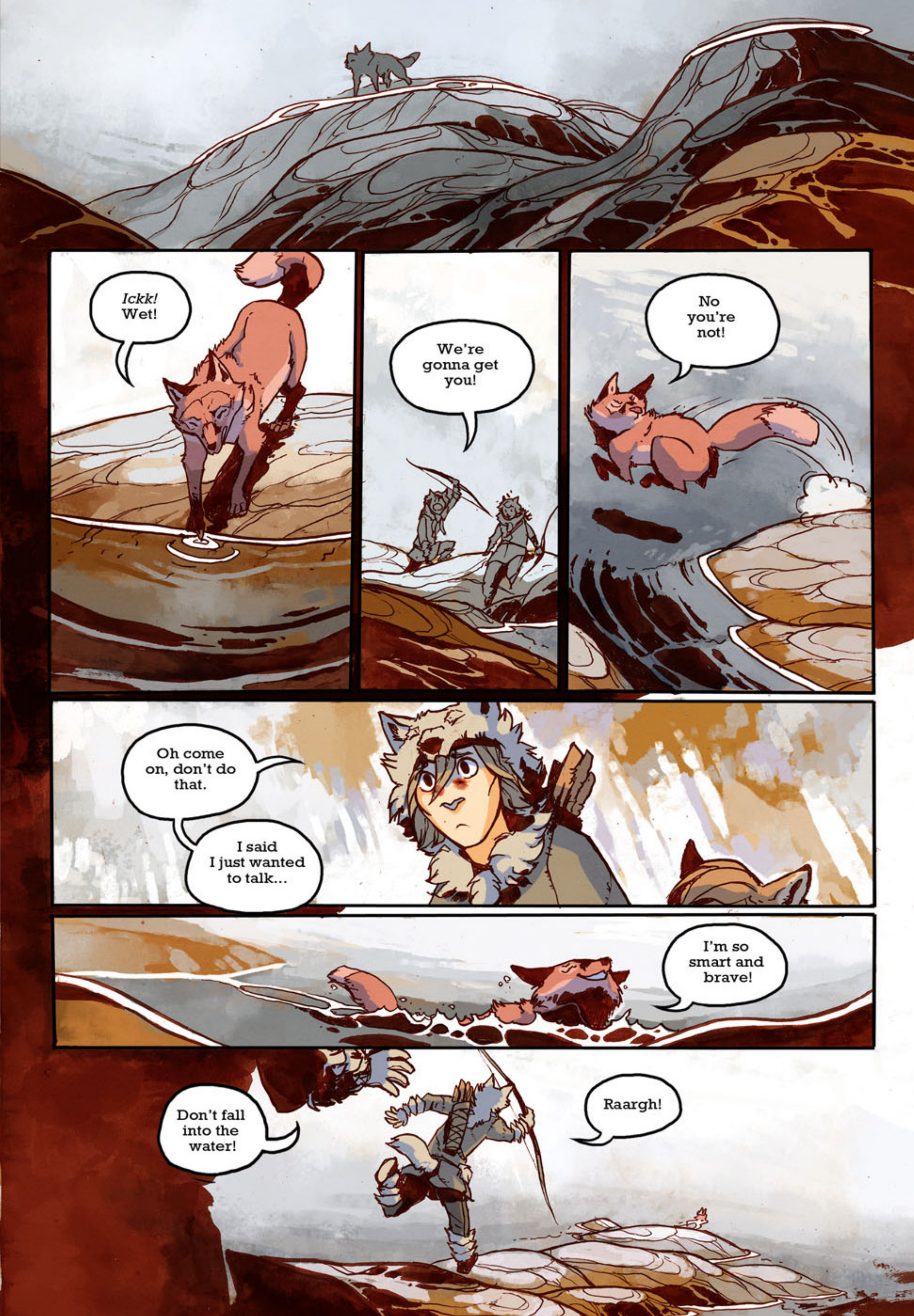

You're welcome!
How big do we make it?
Big! Enough to cover the entrances.
All except one.
Oh, I get it!

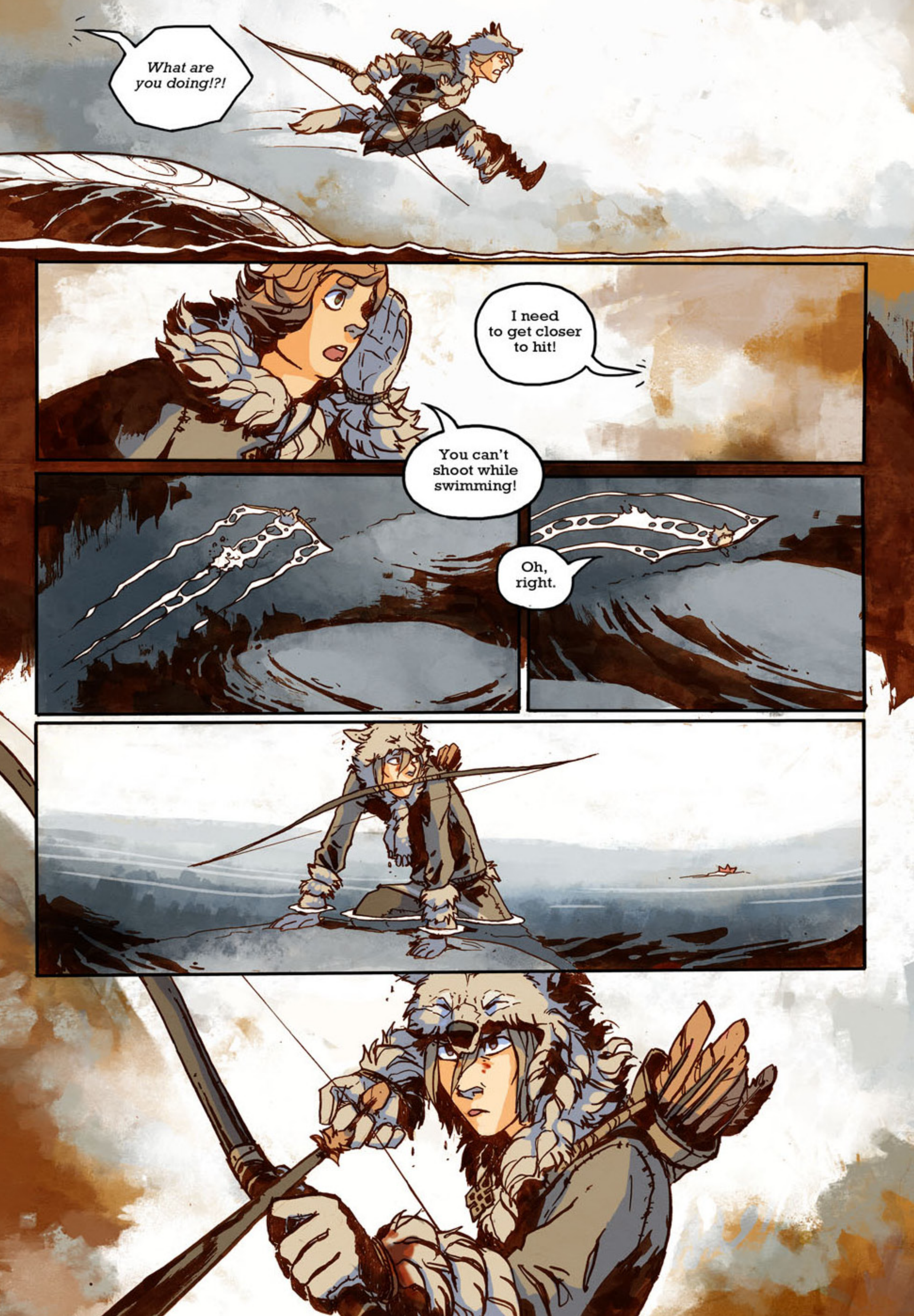

Show your face, little buddy.

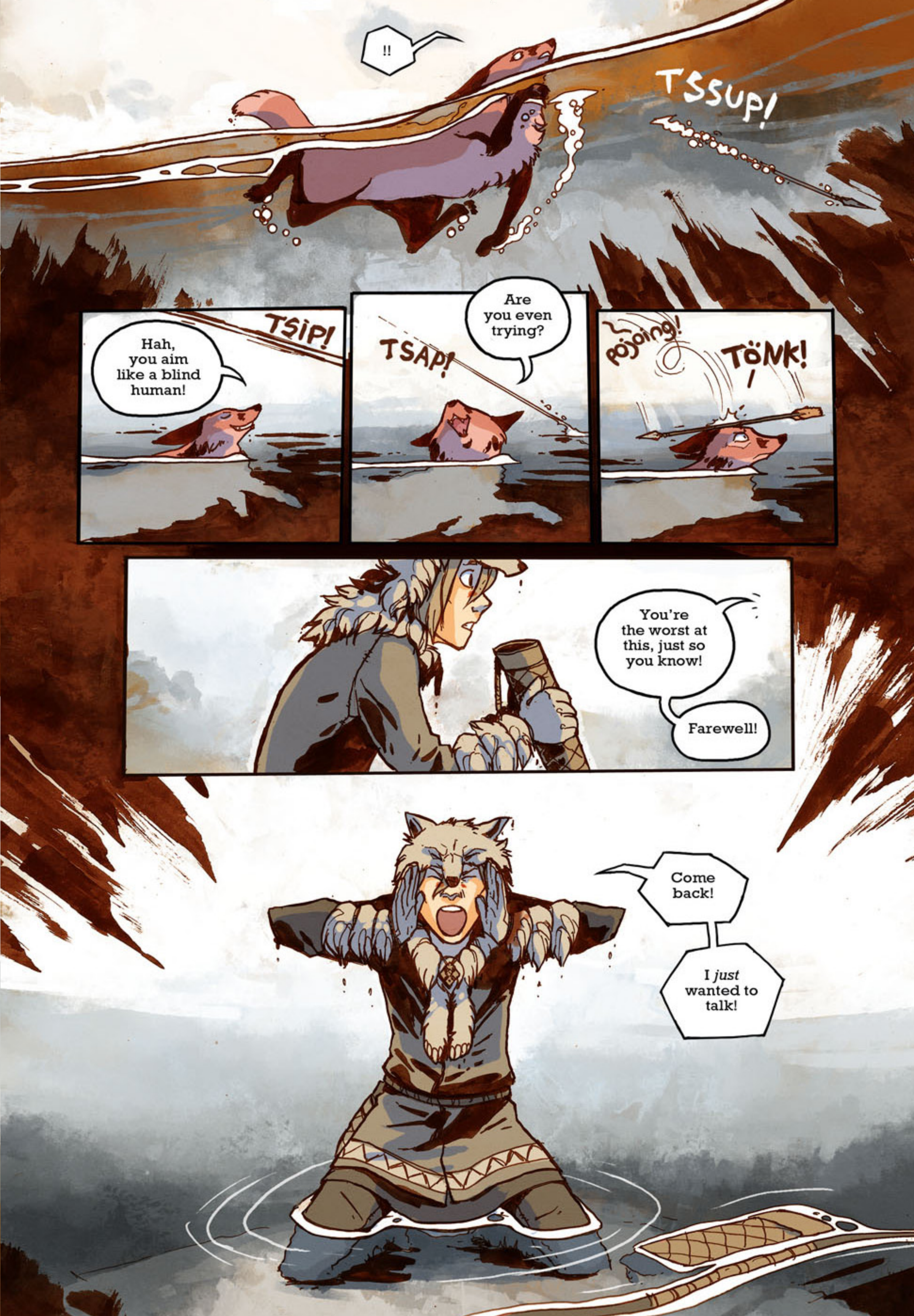

My *face!* It ate my face!
I've got it!
I hope you're happy!
I'm *never* happy!
Uh-oh.

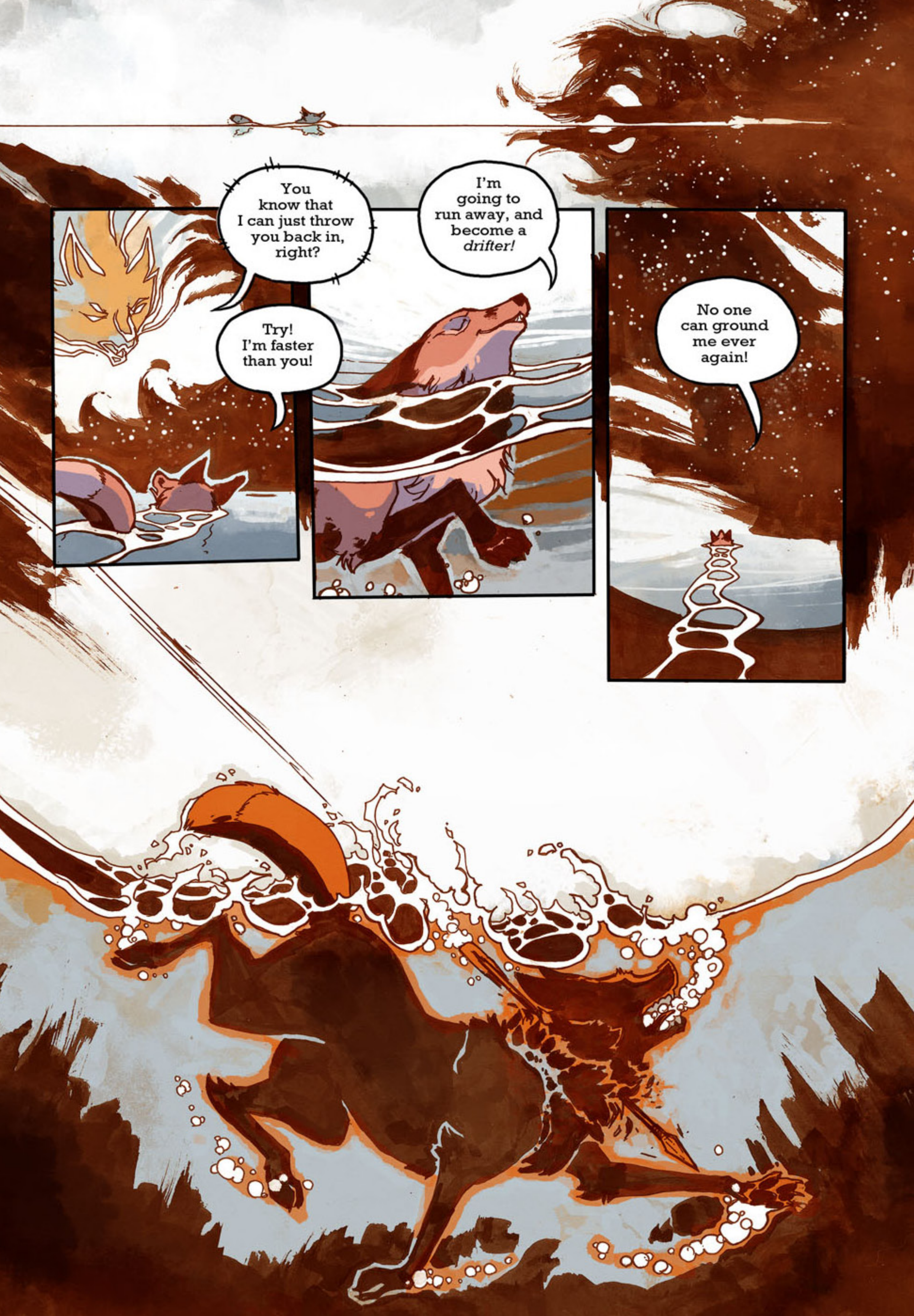

Can I do it?
Stop pulling!
Stop being slow!
Yes I can!
We'll lose him if we slow down!

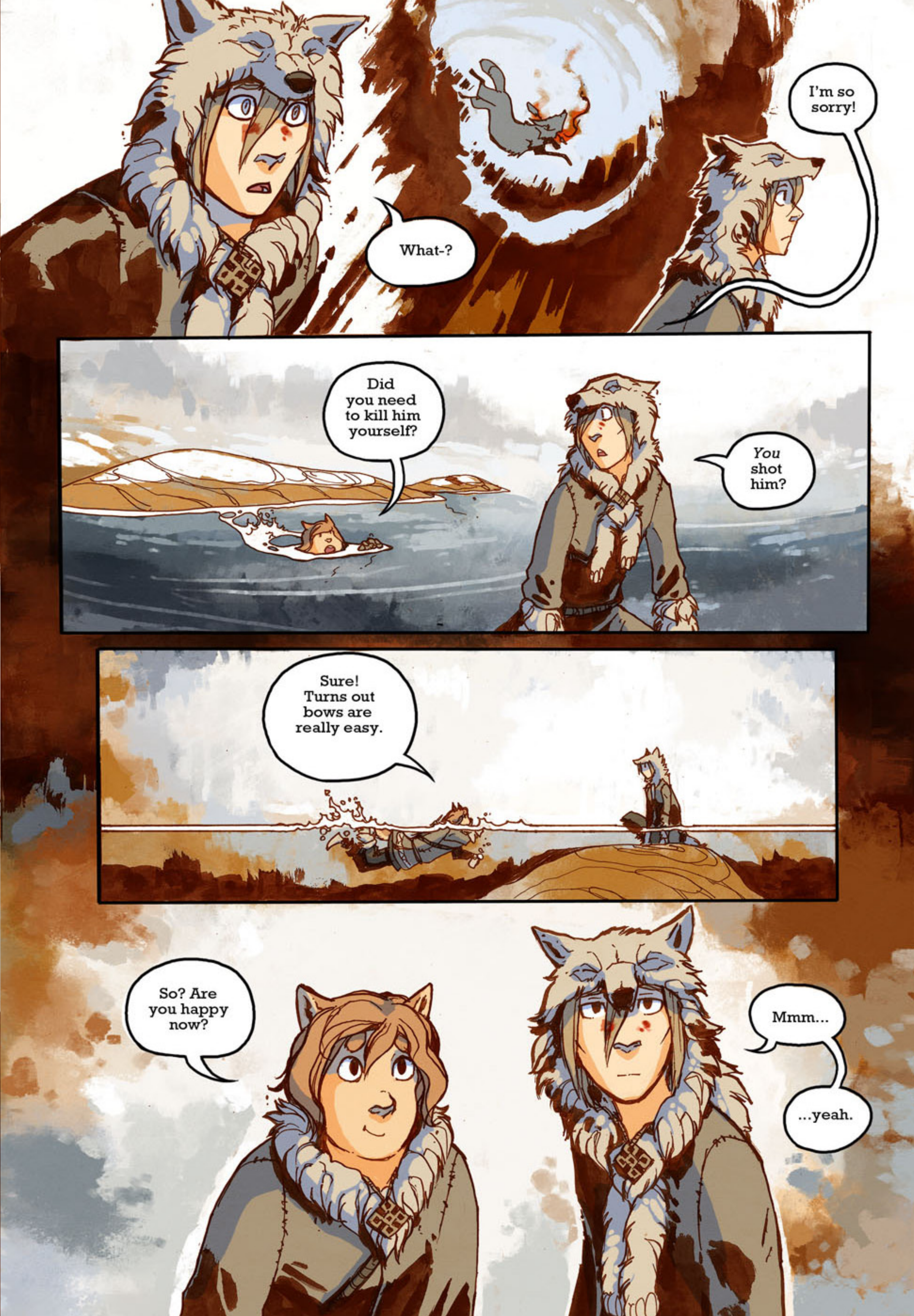

Oh, good!
He didn't get far.
Can you hit him from here?
No, I'm sorry. My hand is too weak.
That's okay. We can get closer if it helps.
He's just running into a dead end anyway.
Uhh...

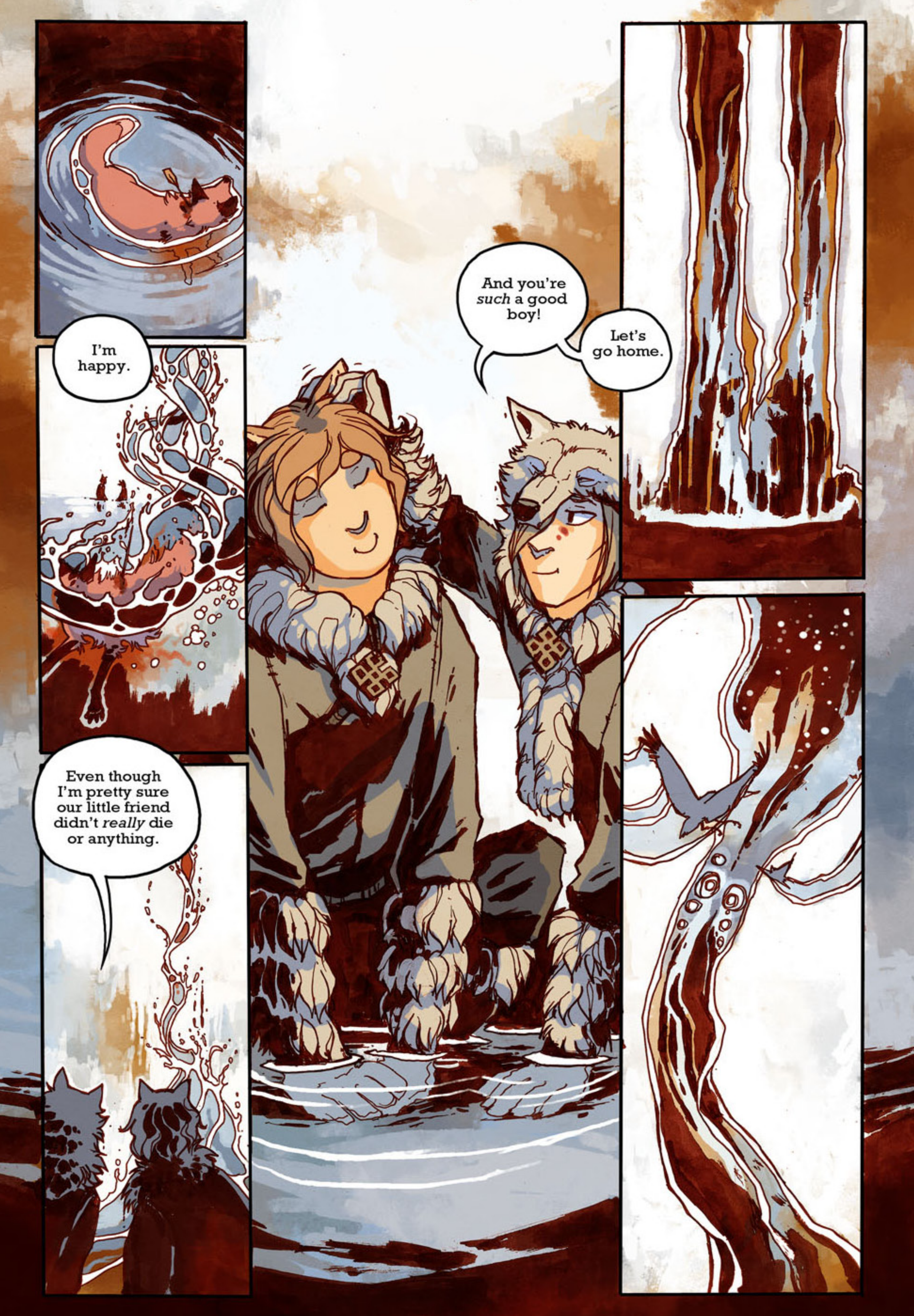

Ickk! Wet!
We're gonna get you!
No you're not!
Oh come on, don't do that.
I said I just wanted to talk...
I'm so smart and brave!
Don't fall into the water!
Raargh!

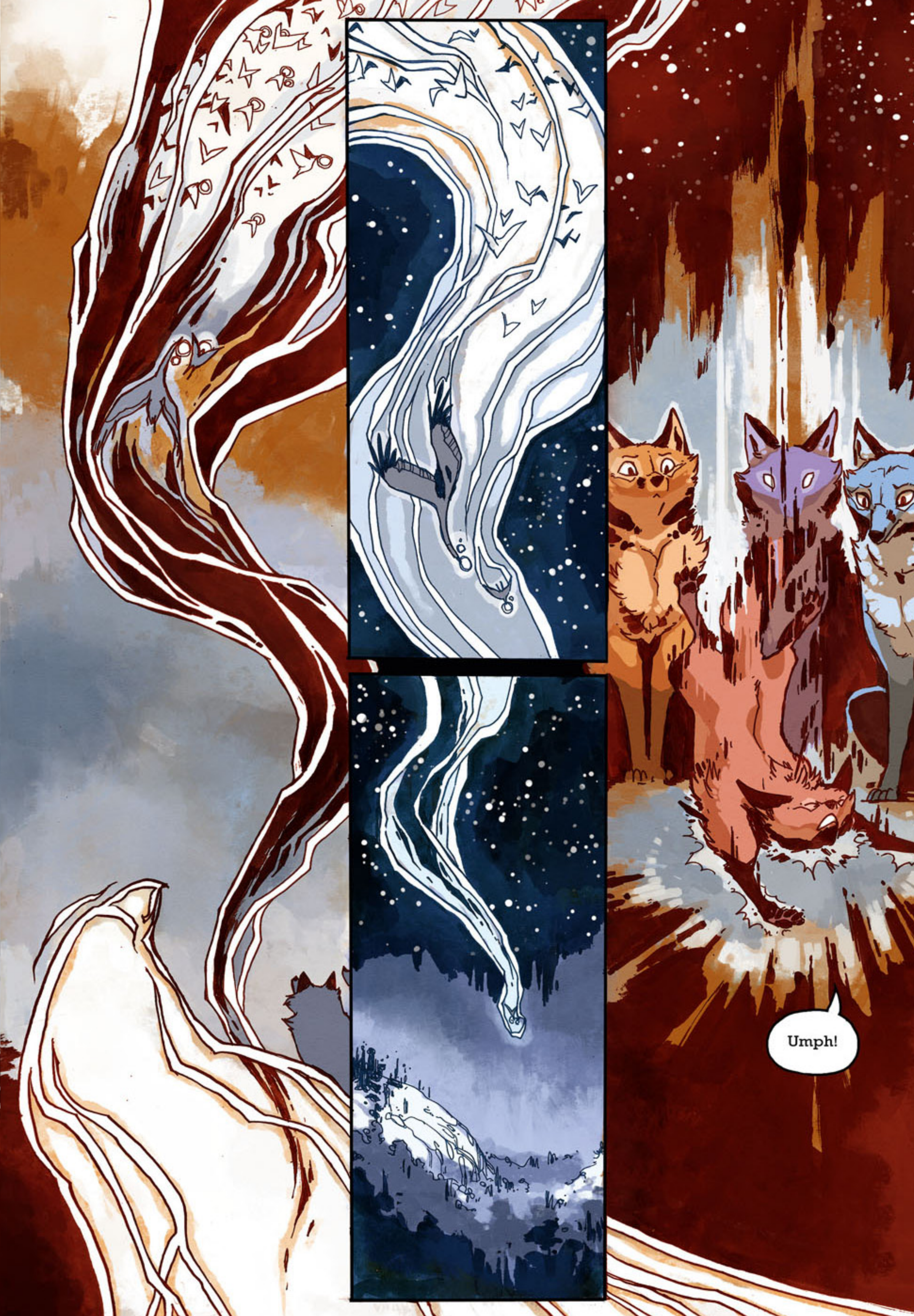

What are you doing!?!
I need to get closer to hit!
You can't shoot while swimming!
Oh, right.

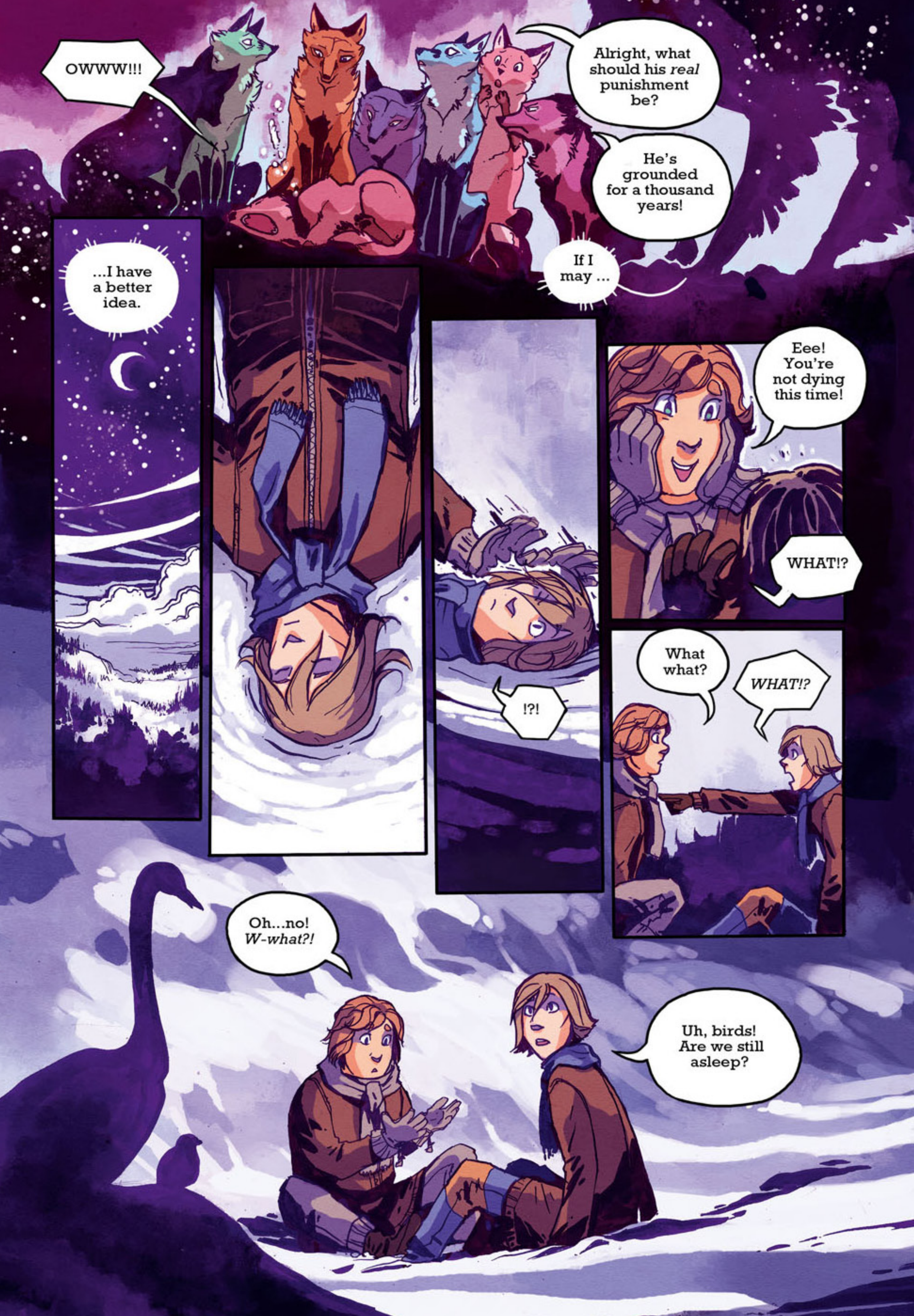

!!
TSSUP!
Hah, you aim like a blind human!
TSIP!
TSAP!
Are you even trying?
POJOING!
TÖNK!
You're the worst at this, just so you know!
Farewell!
Come back!
I *just* wanted to talk!

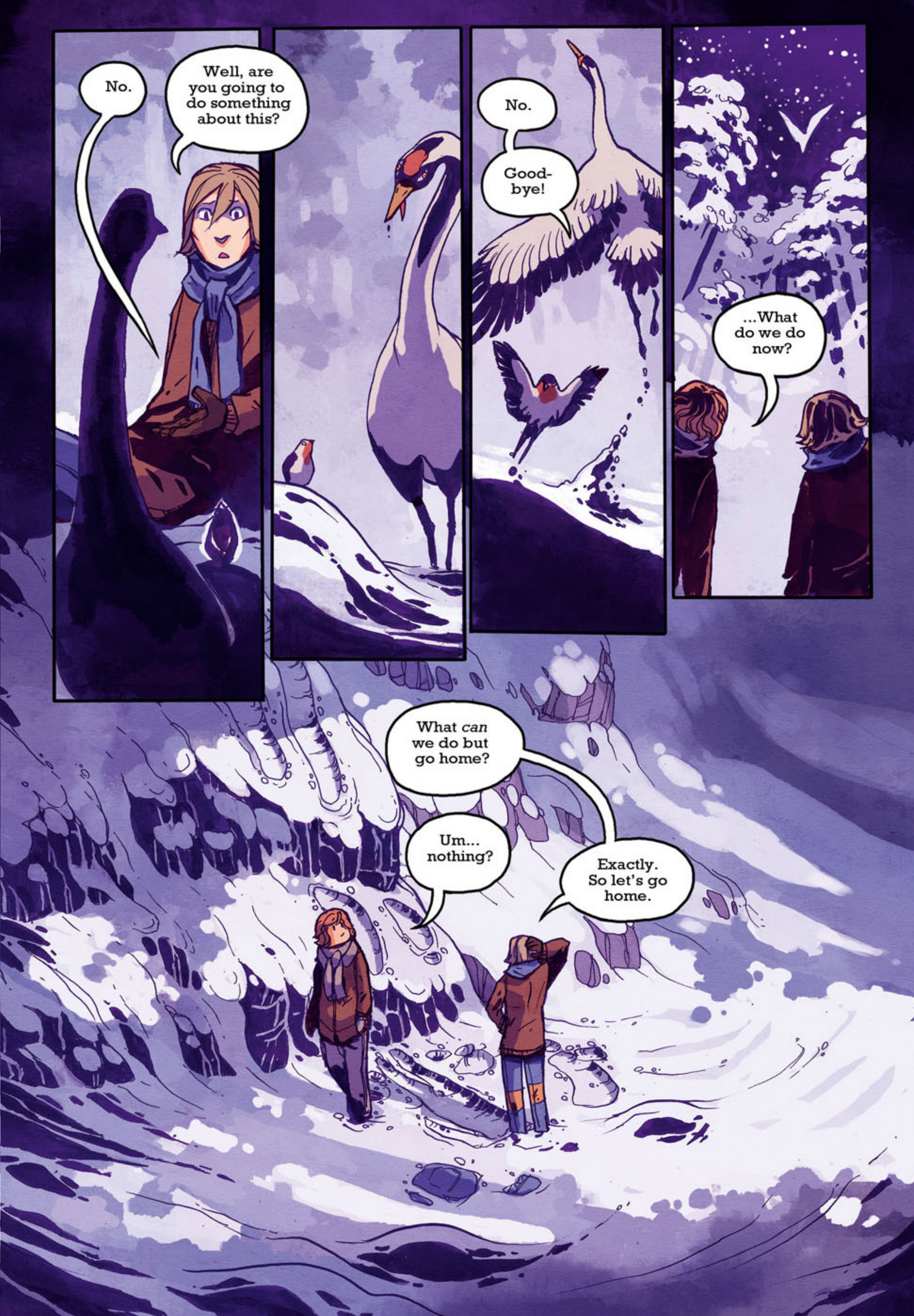

You know that I can just throw you back in, right?
Try! I'm faster than you!
I'm going to run away, and become a *drifter!*
No one can ground me ever again!

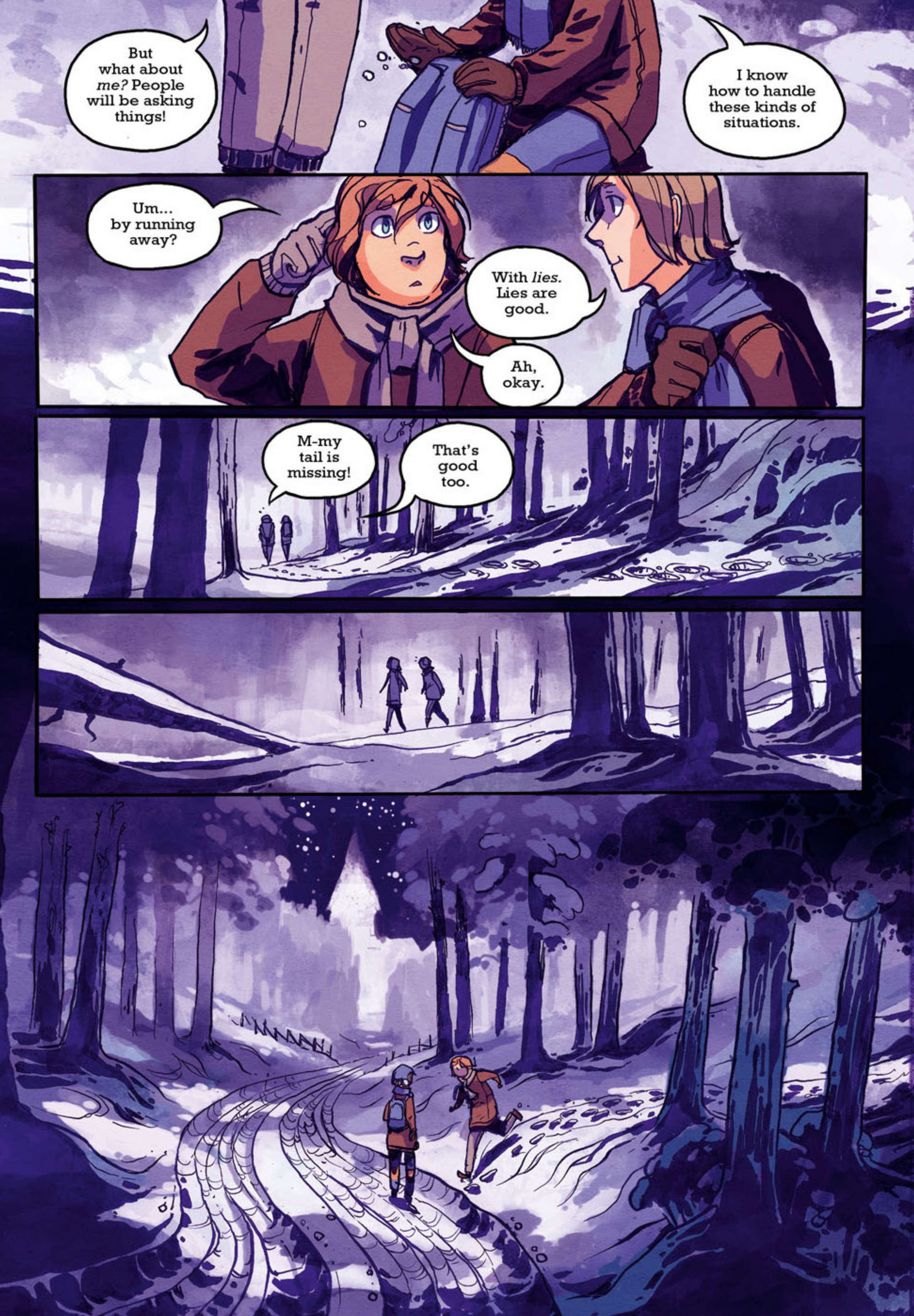

What-?
I'm so sorry!
Did you need to kill him yourself?
You shot him?
Sure! Turns out bows are really easy.
So? Are you happy now?
Mmm...
...yeah.

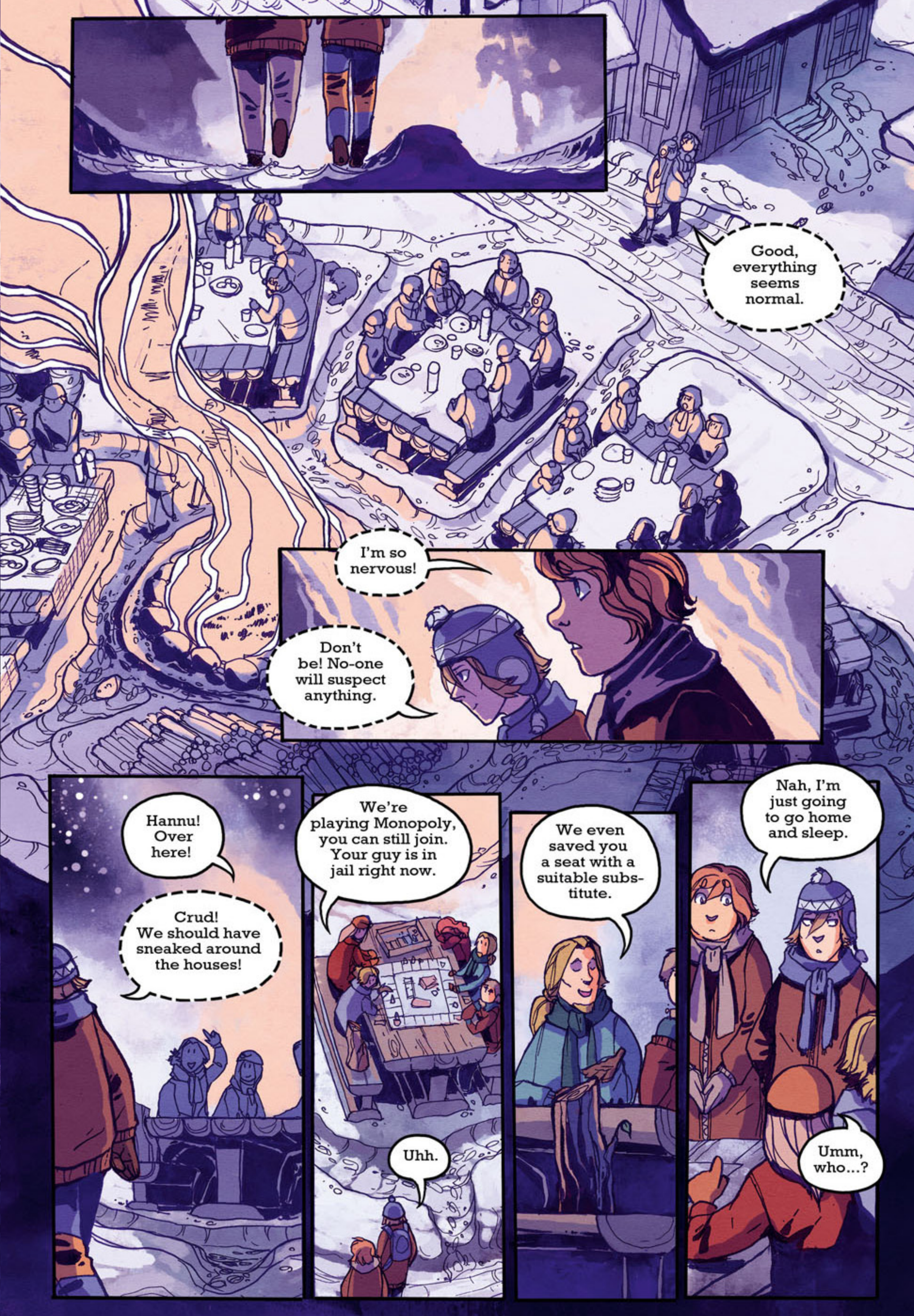

I'm happy.
Even though I'm pretty sure our little friend didn't *really* die or anything.
And you're *such* a good boy!
Let's go home.

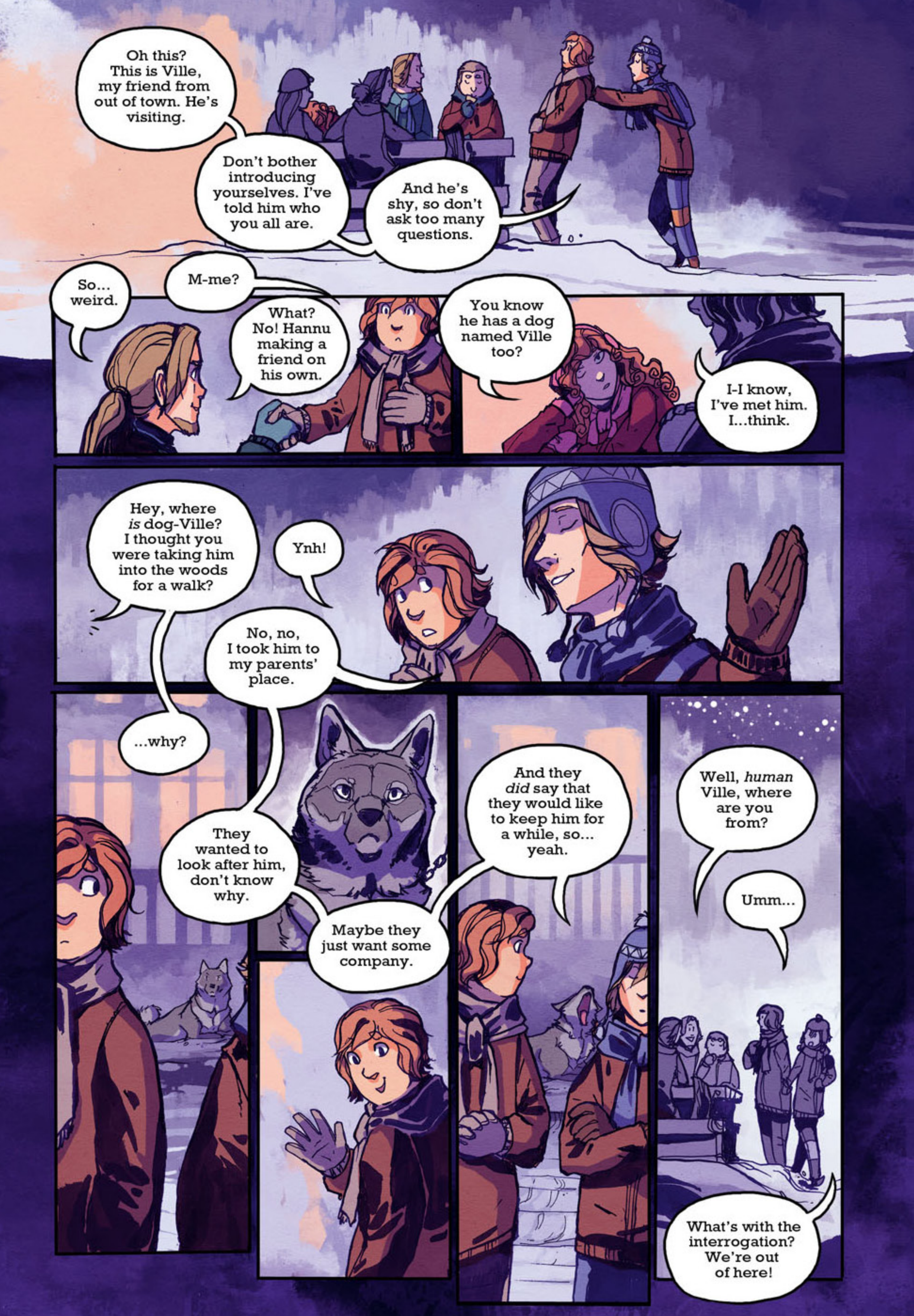

Umph!

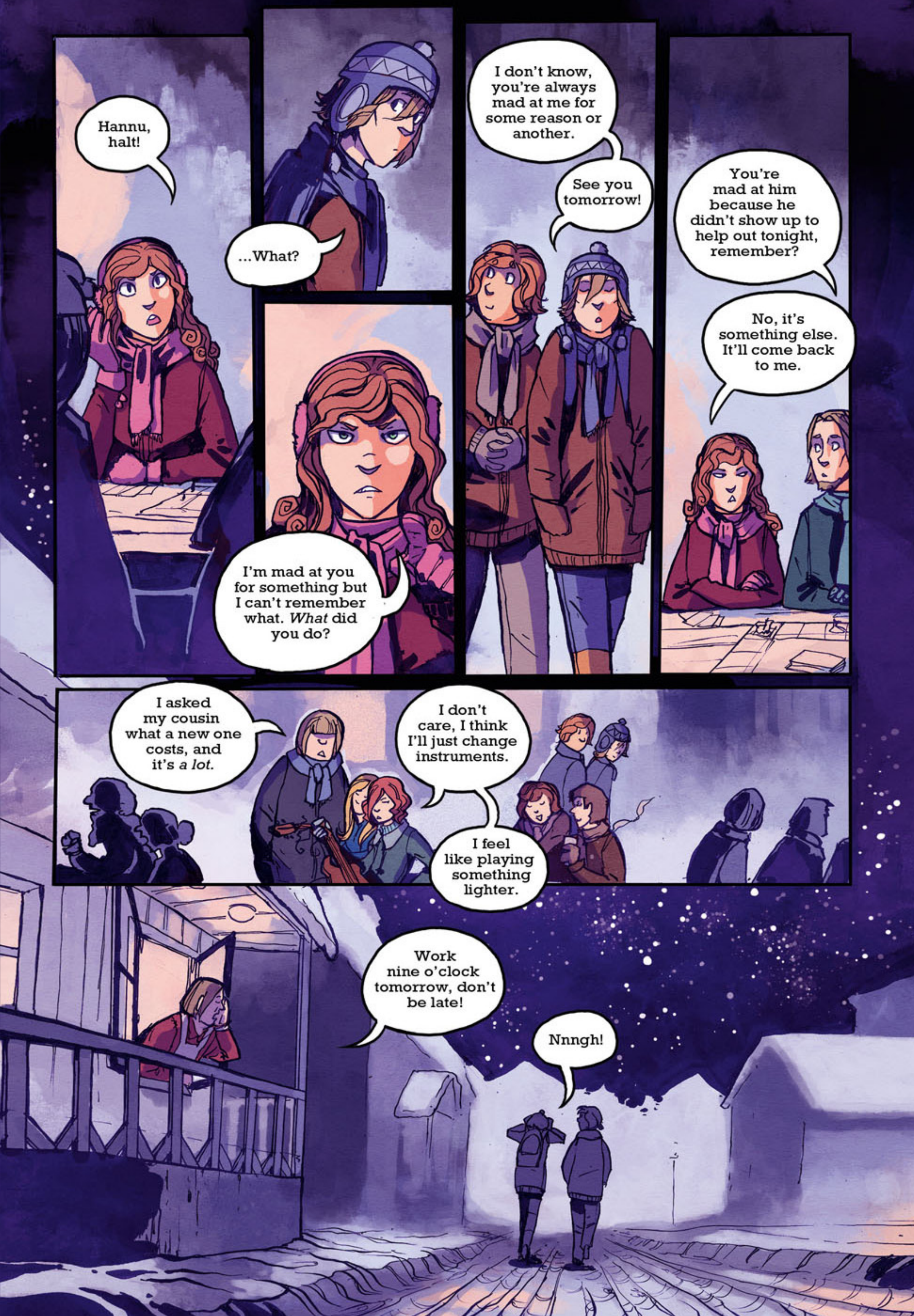

OWWW!!!
Alright, what should his *real* punishment be?
He's grounded for a thousand years!
If I may ...
...I have a better idea.
!?!
Eee! You're not dying this time!
WHAT!?
What what?
WHAT!?
Oh...no! *W-what?!*
Uh, birds! Are we still asleep?

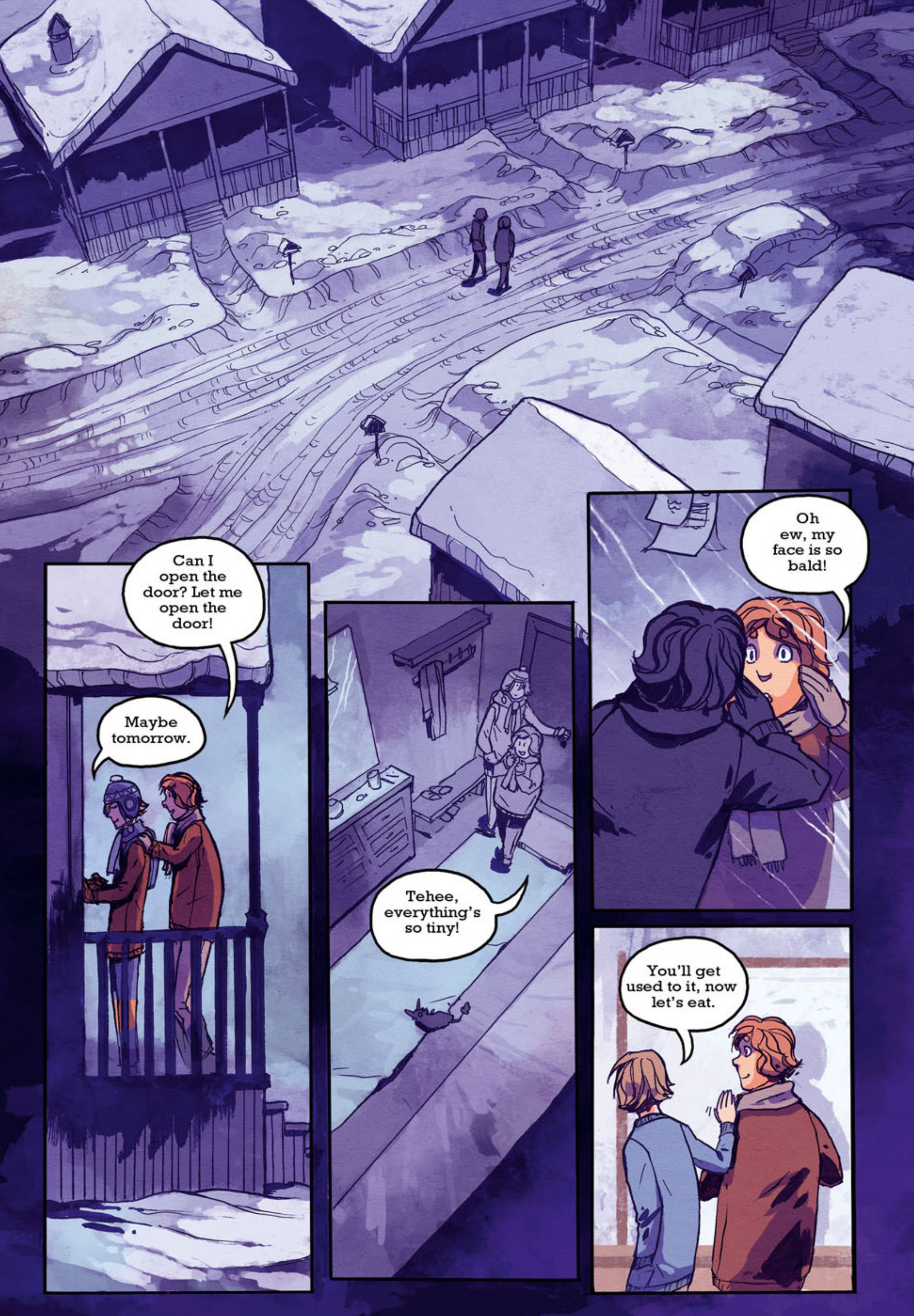

No.
Well, are you going to do something about this?
No.
Good-bye!
...What do we do now?
What *can* we do but go home?
Um... nothing?
Exactly. So let's go home.

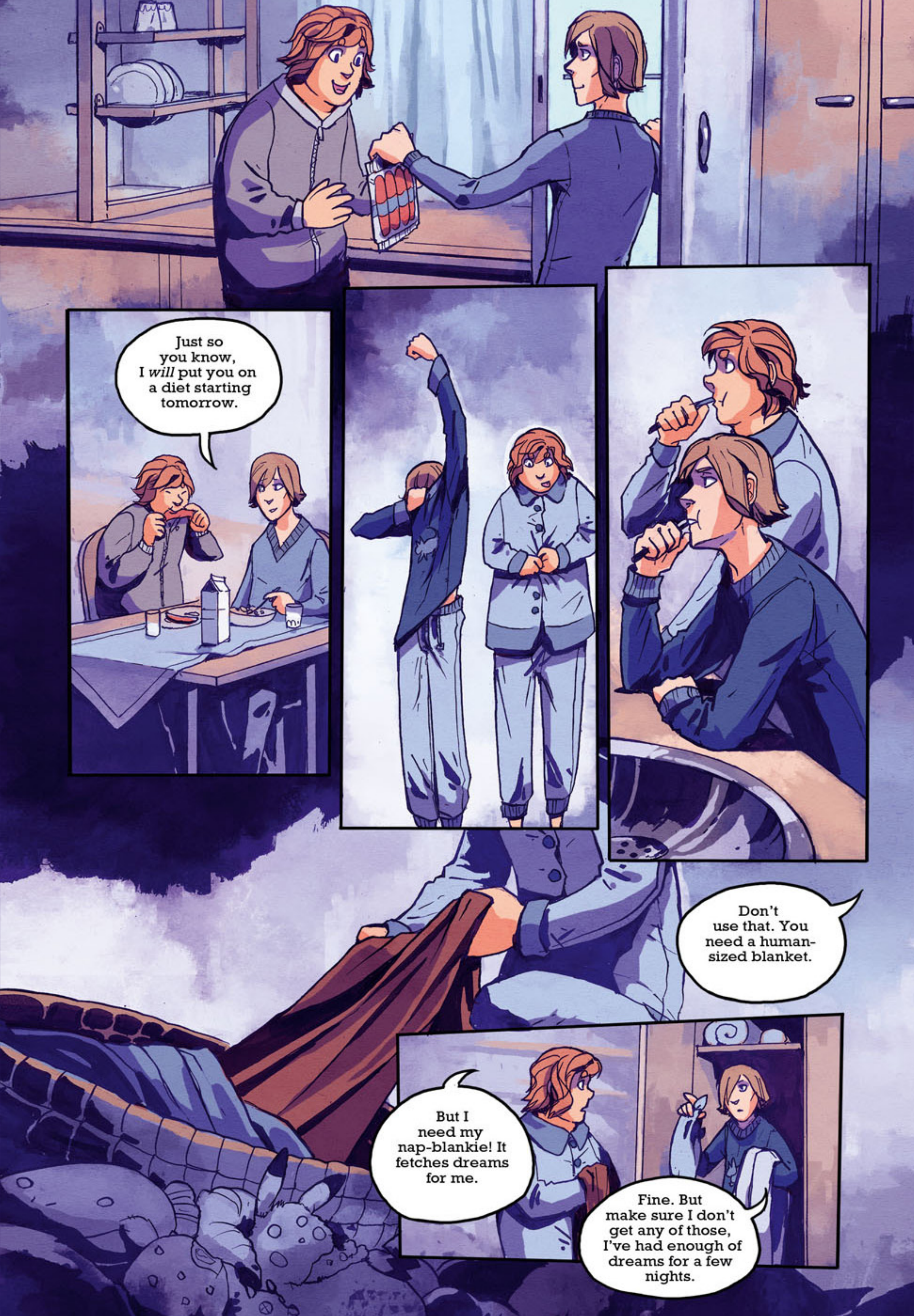

But what about *me?* People will be asking things!
I know how to handle these kinds of situations.
Um... by running away?
With *lies.* Lies are good.
Ah, okay.
M-my tail is missing!
That's good too.

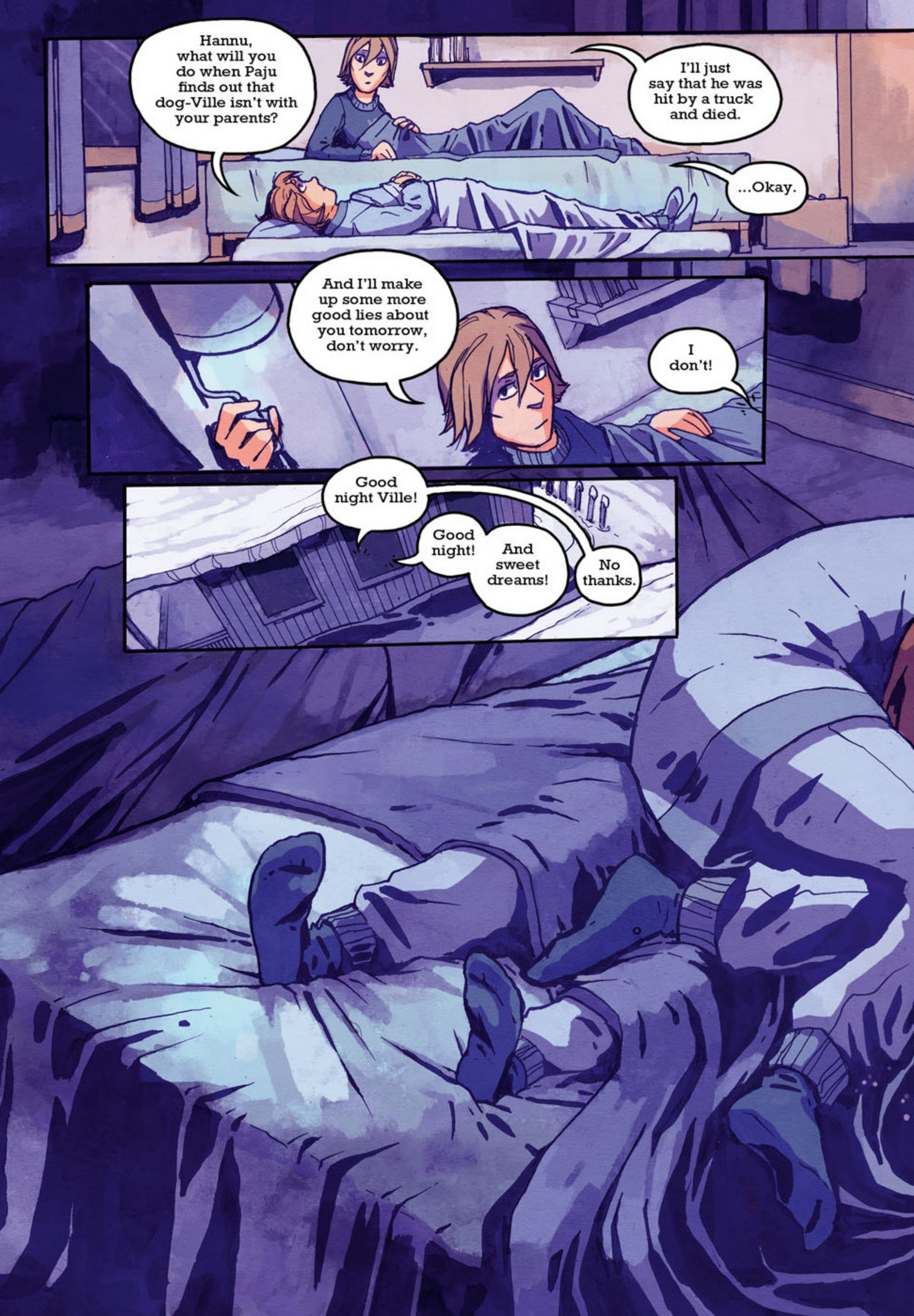

Good, everything seems normal.
I'm so nervous!
Don't be! No-one will suspect anything.
Hannu! Over here!
Crud! We should have sneaked around the houses!
We're playing Monopoly, you can still join. Your guy is in jail right now.
Uhh.
We even saved you a seat with a suitable substitute.
Nah, I'm just going to go home and sleep.
Umm, who...?

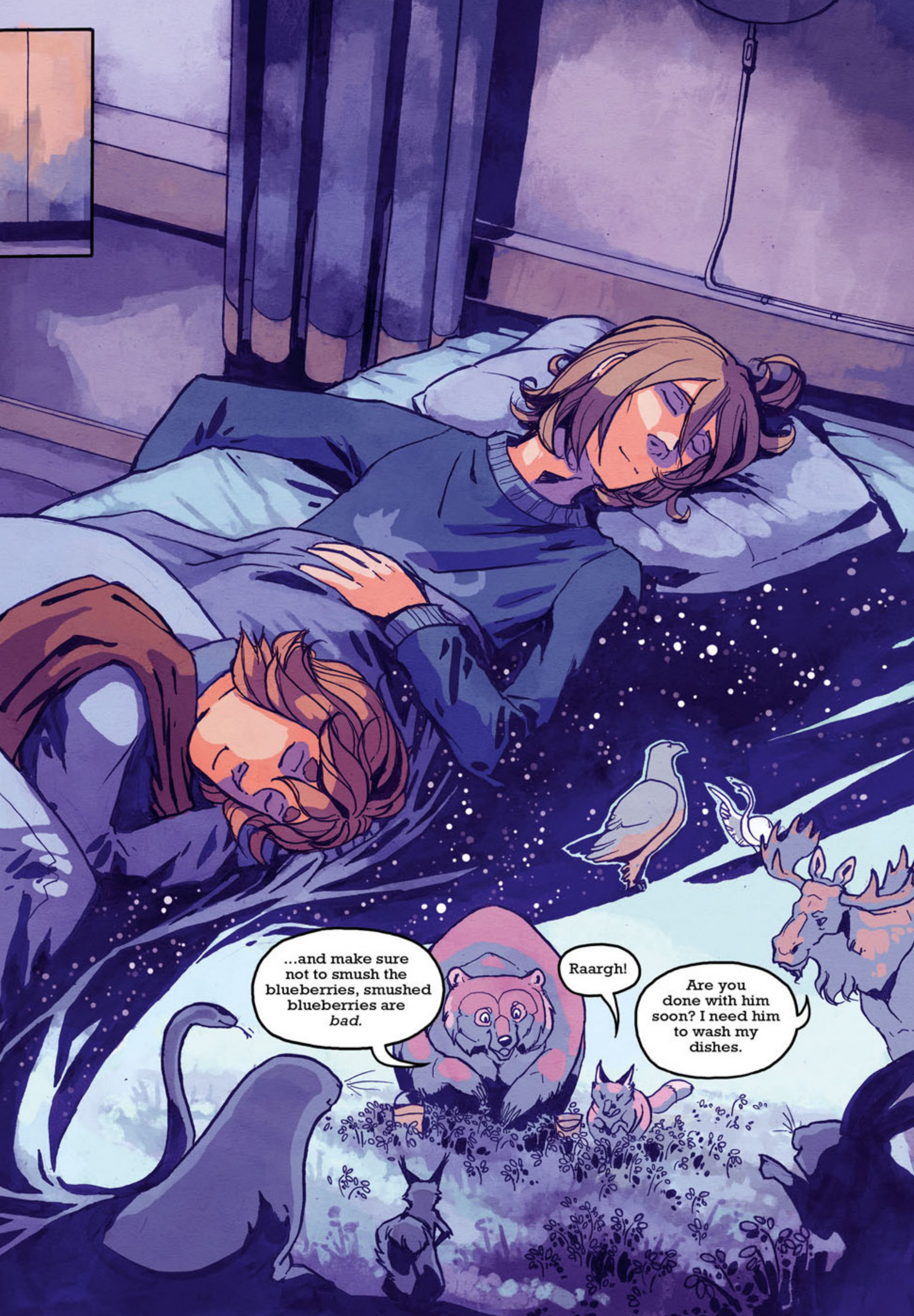

Oh this? This is Ville, my friend from out of town. He's visiting.
Don't bother introducing yourselves. I've told him who you all are.
And he's shy, so don't ask too many questions.
So... weird.
M-me?
What? No! Hannu making a friend on his own.
You know he has a dog named Ville too?
I-I know, I've met him. I...think.
Hey, where *is* dog-Ville? I thought you were taking him into the woods for a walk?
Ynh!
No, no, I took him to my parents' place.
...why?
They wanted to look after him, don't know why.
Maybe they just want some company.
And they *did* say that they would like to keep him for a while, so... yeah.
Well, *human* Ville, where are you from?
Umm...
What's with the interrogation? We're out of here!

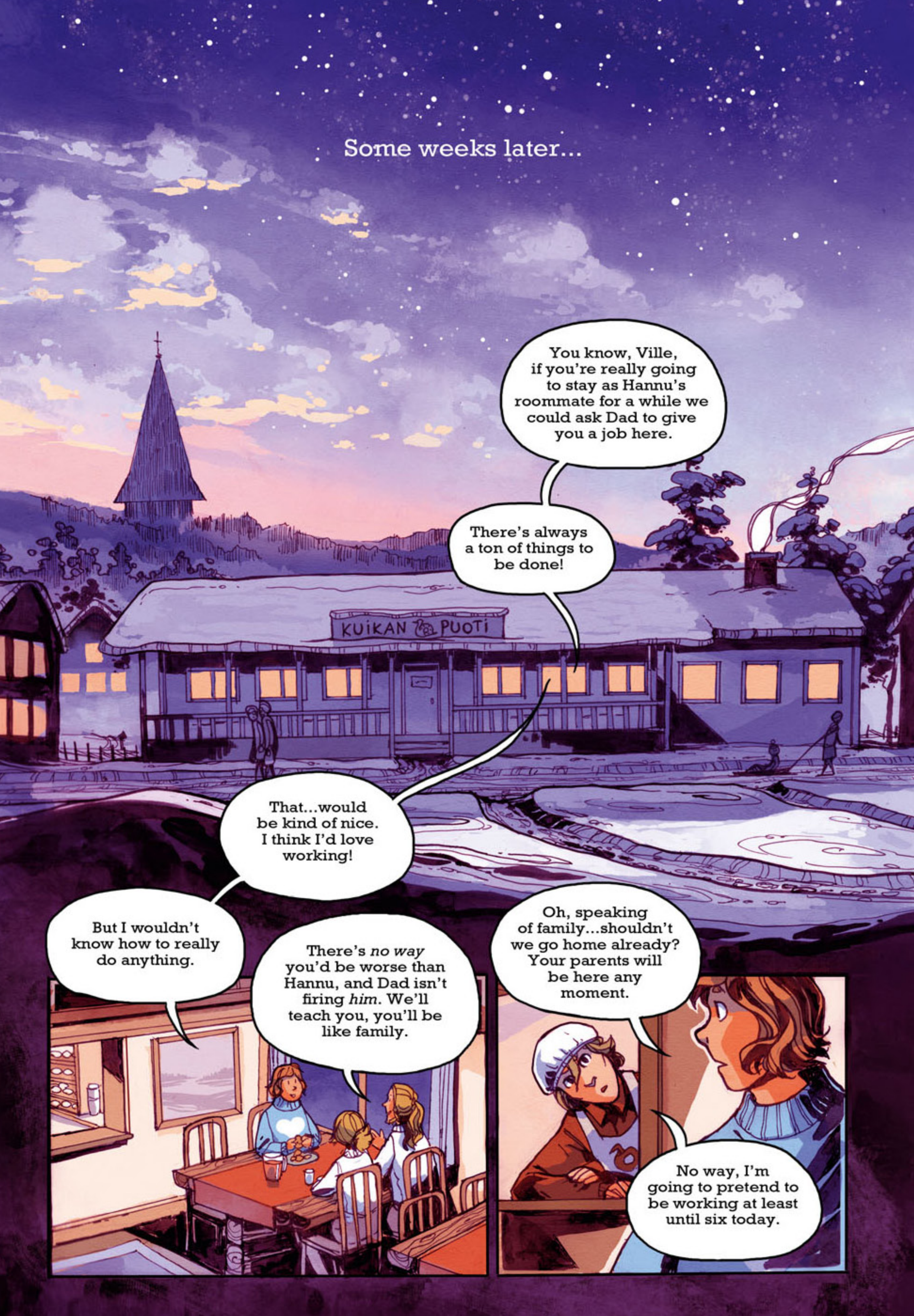

Hannu, halt!
...What?
I'm mad at you for something but I can't remember what. *What* did you do?
I don't know, you're always mad at me for some reason or another.
See you tomorrow!
You're mad at him because he didn't show up to help out tonight, remember?
No, it's something else. It'll come back to me.
I asked my cousin what a new one costs, and it's *a lot*.
I don't care, I think I'll just change instruments.
I feel like playing something lighter.
Work nine o'clock tomorrow, don't be late!
Nnngh!

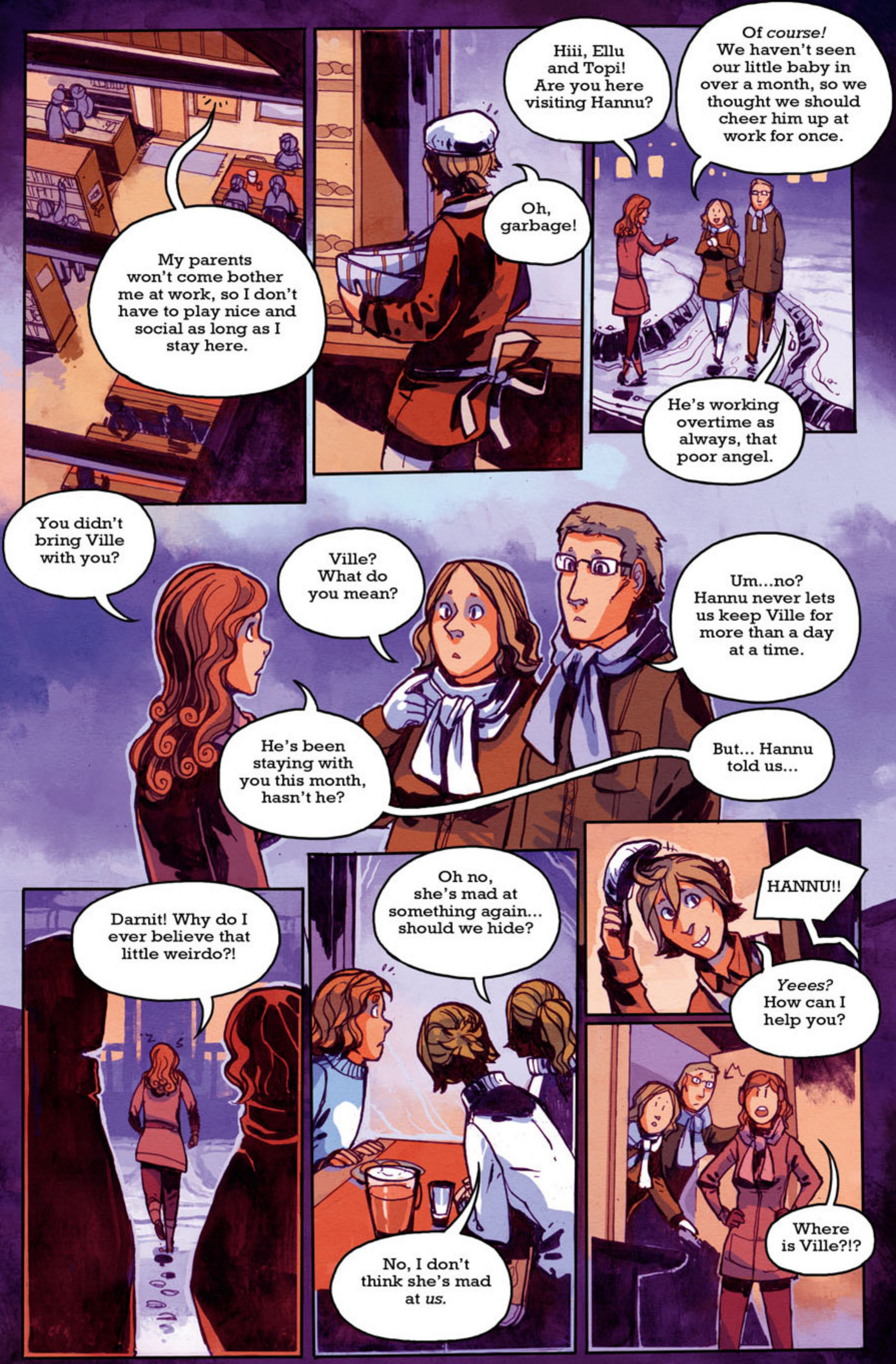

Can I open the door? Let me open the door!
Maybe tomorrow.
Tehee, everything's so tiny!
Oh ew, my face is so bald!
You'll get used to it, now let's eat.

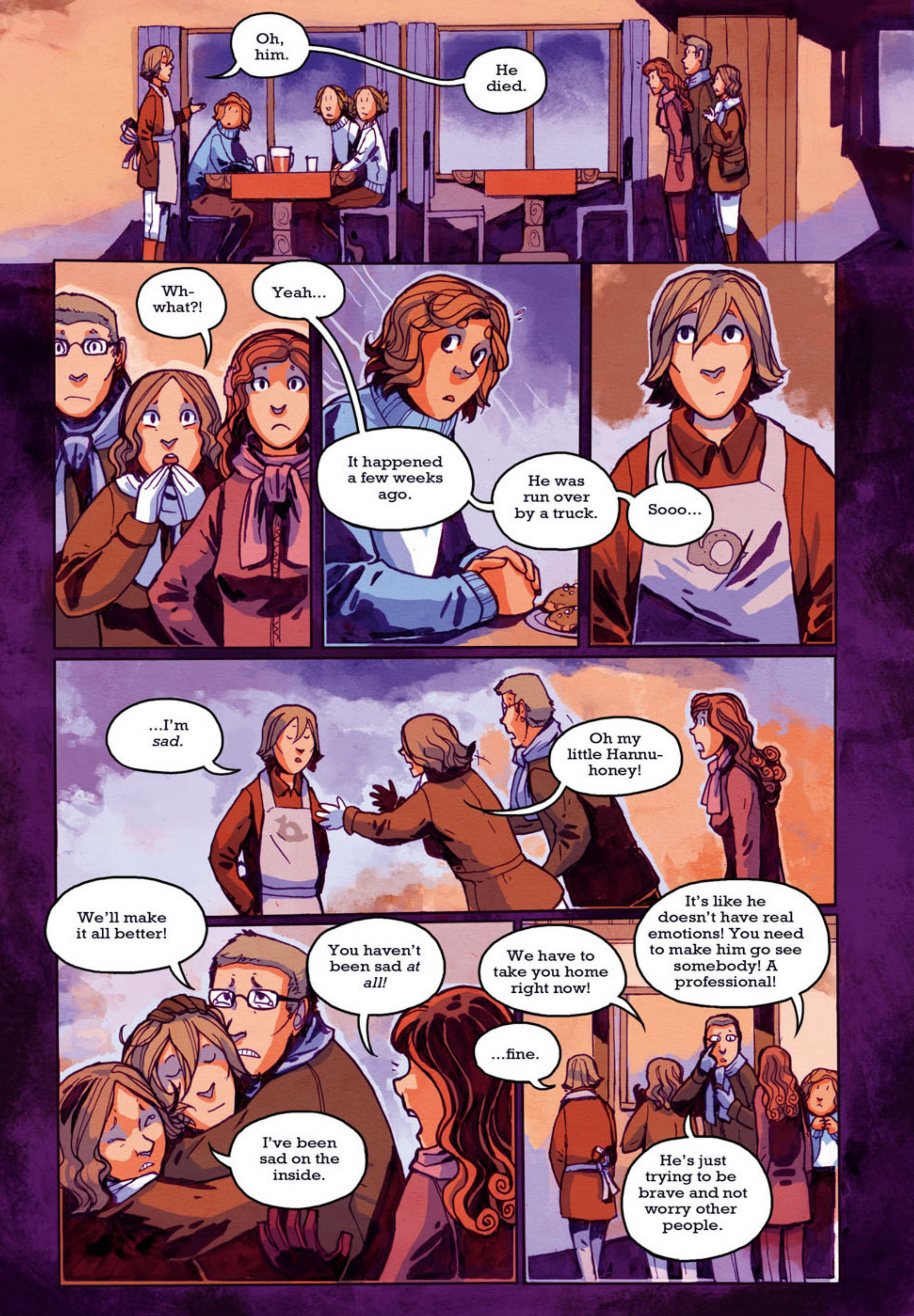

Just so you know, I *will* put you on a diet starting tomorrow.
Don't use that. You need a human-sized blanket.
But I need my nap-blankie! It fetches dreams for me.
Fine. But make sure I don't get any of those, I've had enough of dreams for a few nights.

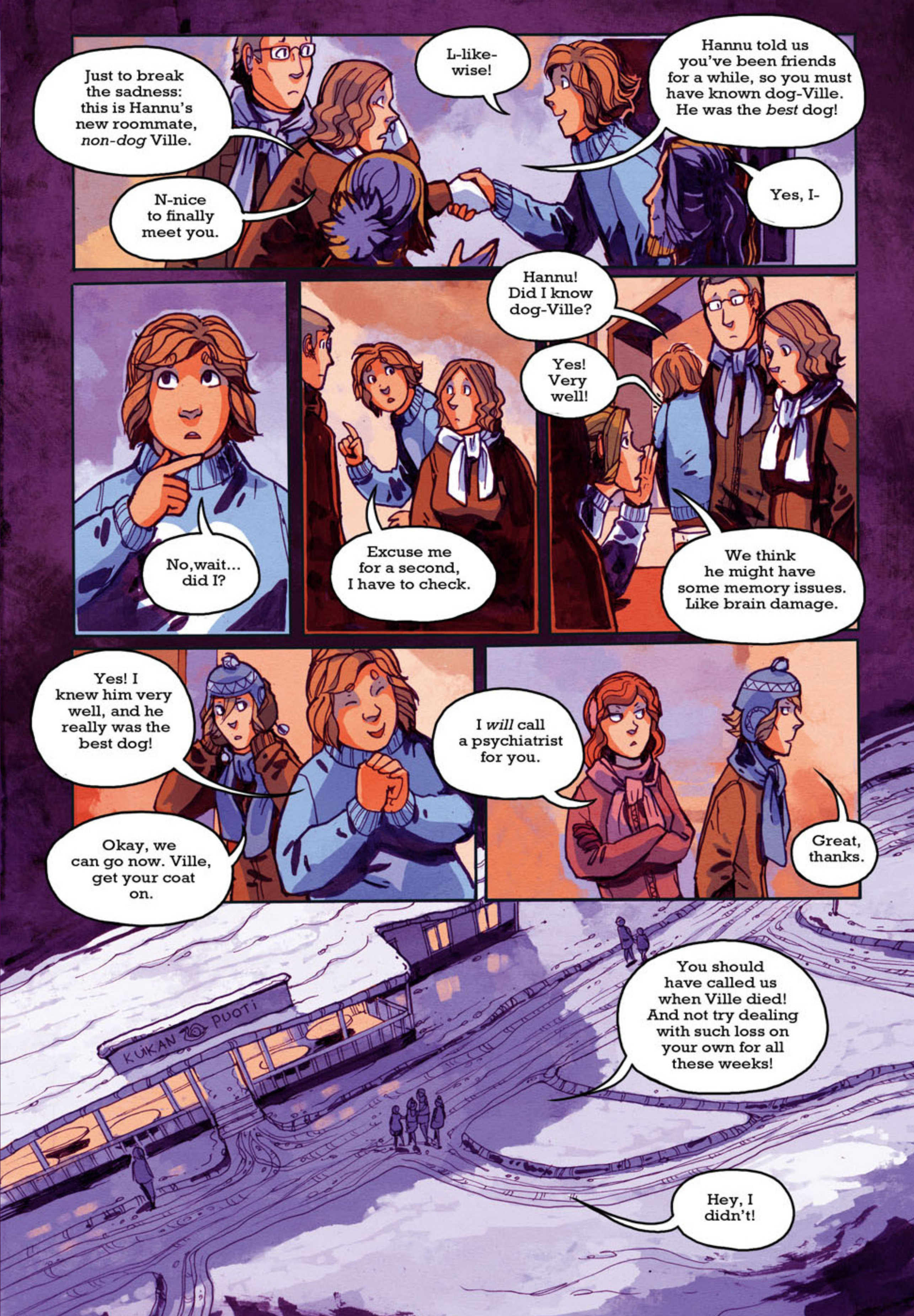

Hannu, what will you do when Paju finds out that dog-Ville isn't with your parents?
I'll just say that he was hit by a truck and died.
...Okay.
And I'll make up some more good lies about you tomorrow, don't worry.
I don't!
Good night Ville!
Good night!
And sweet dreams!
No thanks.

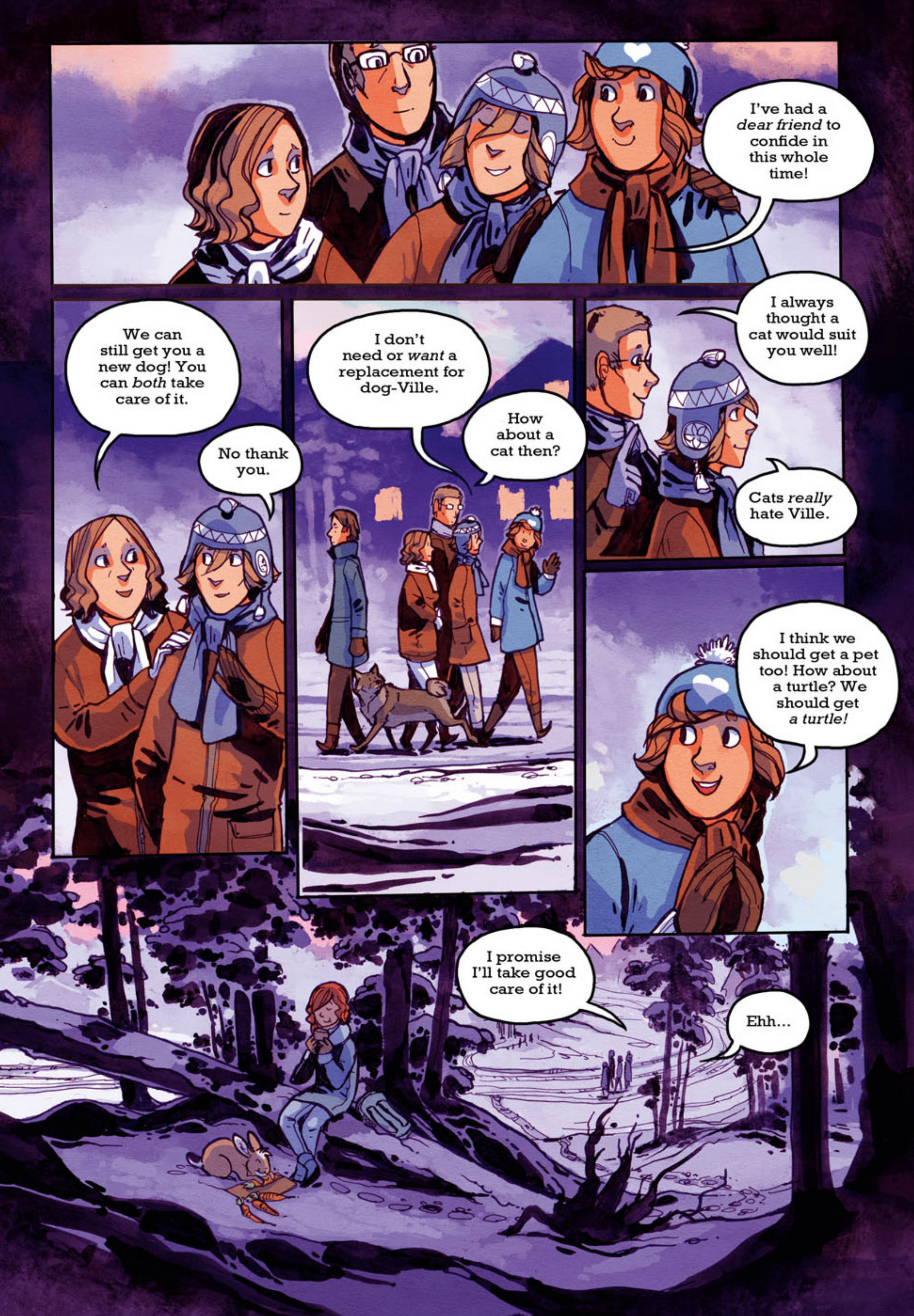

...and make sure not to smush the blueberries, smushed blueberries are *bad.*
Raargh!
Are you done with him soon? I need him to wash my dishes.

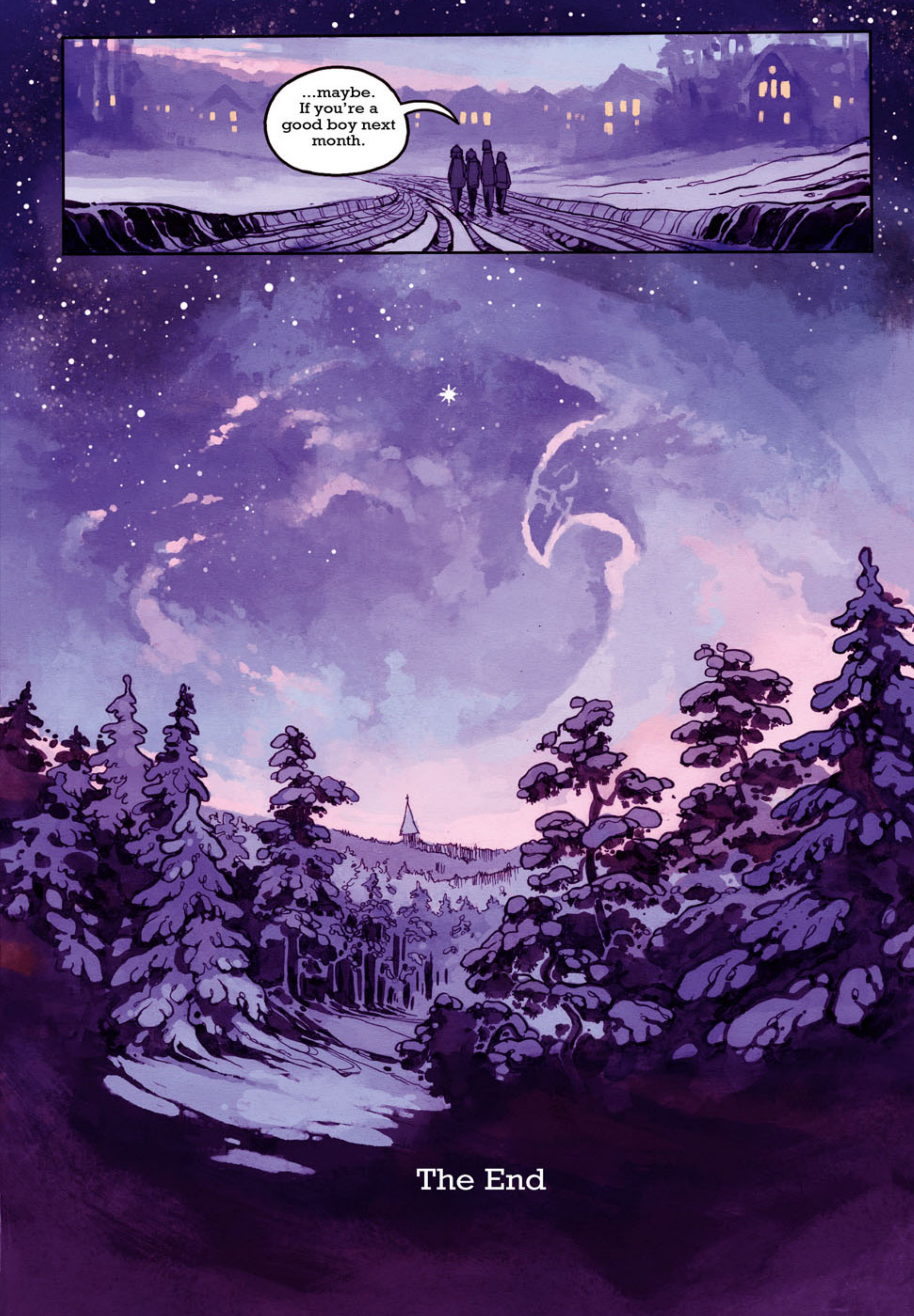

Some weeks later...
KUIKAN PUOTI
You know, Ville, if you're really going to stay as Hannu's roommate for a while we could ask Dad to give you a job here.
There's always a ton of things to be done!
That...would be kind of nice. I think I'd love working!
But I wouldn't know how to really do anything.
There's *no way* you'd be worse than Hannu, and Dad isn't firing *him*. We'll teach you, you'll be like family.
Oh, speaking of family...shouldn't we go home already? Your parents will be here any moment.
No way, I'm going to pretend to be working at least until six today.


My parents won't come bother me at work, so I don't have to play nice and social as long as I stay here.
Oh, garbage!
Hiii, Ellu and Topi! Are you here visiting Hannu?
Of *course!* We haven't seen our little baby in over a month, so we thought we should cheer him up at work for once.
He's working overtime as always, that poor angel.
You didn't bring Ville with you?
Ville? What do you mean?
Um...no? Hannu never lets us keep Ville for more than a day at a time.
He's been staying with you this month, hasn't he?
But... Hannu told us...
Darnit! Why do I ever believe that little weirdo?!
Oh no, she's mad at something again... should we hide?
No, I don't think she's mad at *us.*
HANNU!!
Yeees? How can I help you?
Where is Ville?!?


Oh, him.
He died.
Wh-what?!
Yeah...
It happened a few weeks ago.
He was run over by a truck.
Sooo...
...I'm *sad.*
Oh my little Hannu-honey!
We'll make it all better!
You haven't been sad *at all!*
I've been sad on the inside.
We have to take you home right now!
...fine.
It's like he doesn't have real emotions! You need to make him go see somebody! A professional!
He's just trying to be brave and not worry other people.


Just to break the sadness: this is Hannu's new roommate, *non-dog* Ville.
N-nice to finally meet you.
L-like-wise!
Hannu told us you've been friends for a while, so you must have known dog-Ville. He was the *best* dog!
Yes, I-
No,wait... did I?
Excuse me for a second, I have to check.
Hannu! Did I know dog-Ville?
Yes! Very well!
We think he might have some memory issues. Like brain damage.
Yes! I knew him very well, and he really was the best dog!
Okay, we can go now. Ville, get your coat on.
I *will* call a psychiatrist for you.
Great, thanks.
KUKAN PUOTI
You should have called us when Ville died! And not try dealing with such loss on your own for all these weeks!
Hey, I didn't!


I've had a *dear friend* to confide in this whole time!
We can still get you a new dog! You can *both* take care of it.
No thank you.
I don't need or *want* a replacement for dog-Ville.
How about a cat then?
I always thought a cat would suit you well!
Cats *really* hate Ville.
I think we should get a pet too! How about a turtle? We should get *a turtle!*
I promise I'll take good care of it!
Ehh...


...maybe. If you're a good boy next month.
The End

Afterword

I can not claim that making comics has been a lifelong dream of mine. Quite the opposite, working on one single story for weeks, months, even years seemed to me like a terrible situation to be in. Making illustrations where I could be done with one subject in a couple of days and then move on to a completely different idea felt less trapping. But I wasn't genuinely passionate about pursuing a career as an illustrator either, drawing for others just isn't that much fun. In fact I had no profession in mind that I was genuinely excited about back when I started my studies at the School of Industrial Arts at Aalto University in 2010. I was just hoping that after a few years of studies I could get some kind of art-related job, maybe illustration would be the least tedious option. I could always do my own illustrations and shorter comic projects on my own time when I felt like it, right? I also decided that my university years would be an excellent time to practice drawing comics, so that I could do my future ideas justice. And working on "A Redtail's Dream", my first proper comic, slowly ignited a brand new passion and gave me a new path to follow.

I spent the two final years of my university studies working on the over 550 pages of "A Redtail's Dream", and it was a very intense and solitary labour. I needed to get one page done every day to keep my self-imposed deadline of finishing the comic around the time of my graduation. Of course I also had to keep up with my full-time studies, so I was often up and drawing well past midnight to get my daily page done. Since "A Redtail's Dream" was my "silly little practice comic" I spent quite some time also planning my next comic, that I wanted to start drawing right after I got out of school (which I did, by the way.)

Afterword

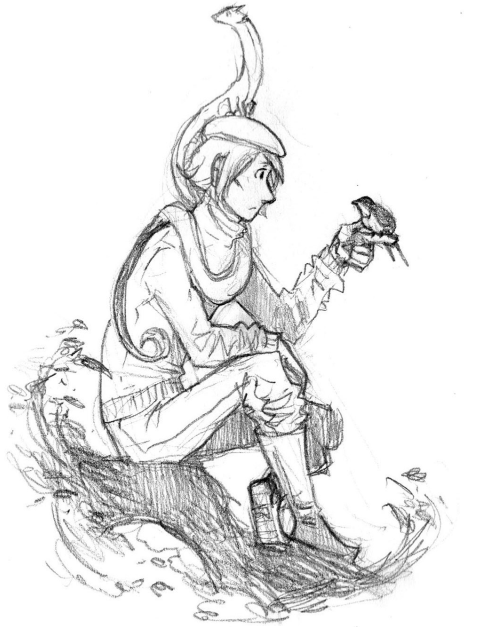
Even though I did the physical work of making he comic all on my own, I could not have accomplished any of this if it wasn't for the constant support of my parents. They have always let me pursue my goal of becoming some sort of "real" artist one day, encouraging me and providing me the means to do it. My mother always made sure that I had every possible piece of art material that I needed at hand, and my father bought me my first digital drawing tablet when I was a teenager, completely out of the blue, before I even knew such a thing existed. Also, if hadn't had the option to live with my parents during the whole time that I was studying and drawing this comic, which meant that I never had to worry about making money for rent, I bet I wouldn't have had the time or energy to finish this project. I probably wouldn't have started in the first place.

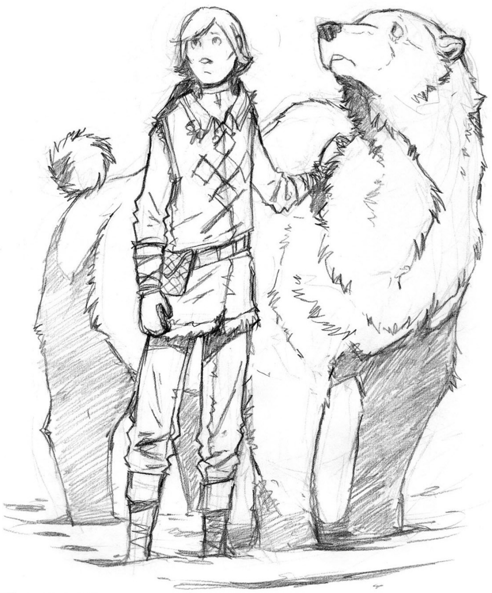
And finally it was the kindness and generosity of my readers online that has led me to the path of becoming an independent comic artist. More specifically: a webcomic artist! There are so many opportunities and paths to choose from in the world of online publishing, and the direct interaction with the readers is often such an energizing experience. I don't feel like I'd ever want to make a comic and only publish it in print form, without also letting everyone read it for free online. Because if my experiences with my first comic are any indication of what the future might have in store for me, it is very much possible to make a living from a graphic novel after giving it away for free. And I do hope that I'll be able to give you all many new comics during my lifetime!

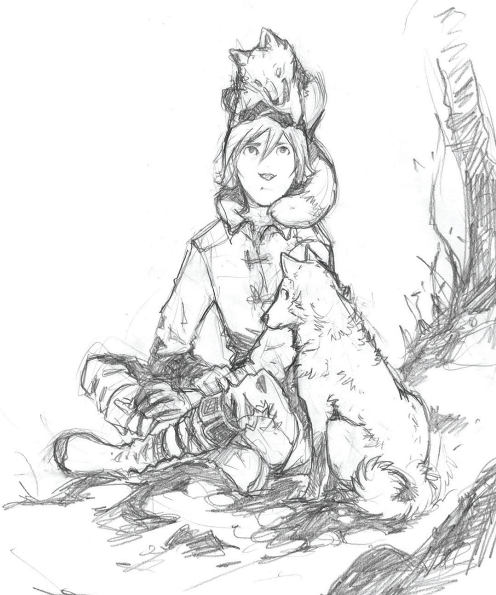
1
A Redtail's Dream

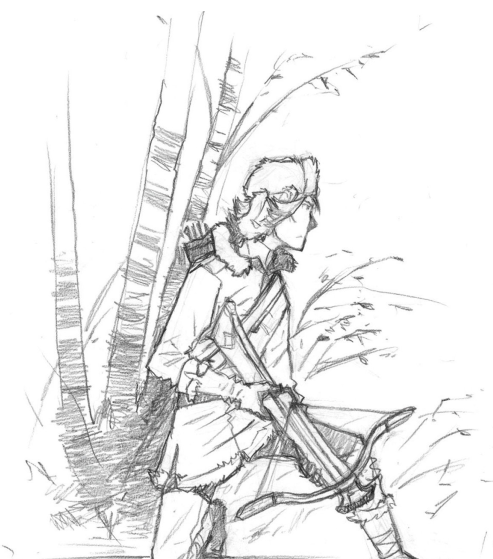
Left: Original cover, chapter 1. Initially the first chapter started when Hannu Ville woke up in the woods, not when Ville turned into a squirrel. So there was no cover page with Ville's squirrel form at all, while all the other forms got one. I decided to move the start of the first chapter to its more logical place for this book, but of course I had to include the old cover somewhere. I'm still very happy with with how it looks, and I remember putting a lot of effort into it. It was, after all, the very first chapter cover that I drew. Yes, I drew it long before the prologue cover!

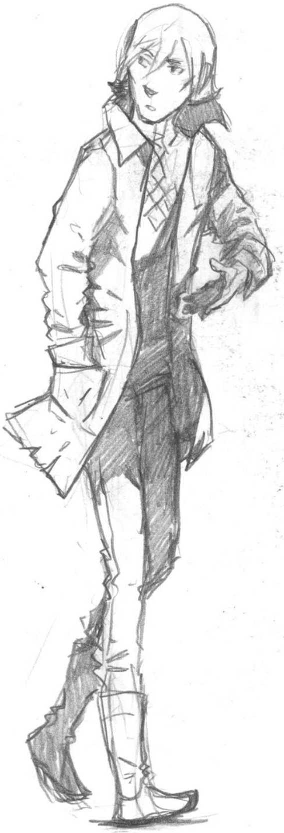
Below and next page: some sketches. I didn't make a lot of concept sketches before starting the comic or before each chapter, just a handful now and then. I wish I had done more, but I just don't enjoy doodling around with sketches when I could just be working on the real product, in this case the actual comic pages. And I almost never drew sketches of the secondary characters before actually drawing them in the comic, so almost all of the sketches I do have are of Hannu and Ville.

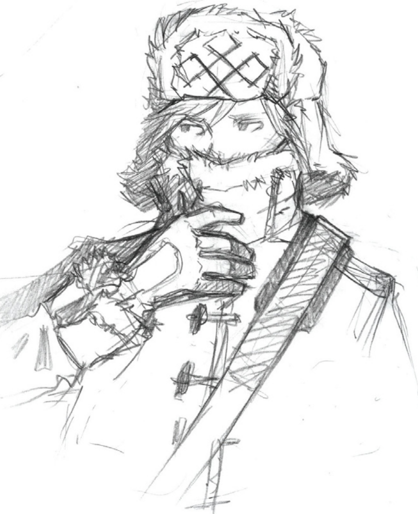


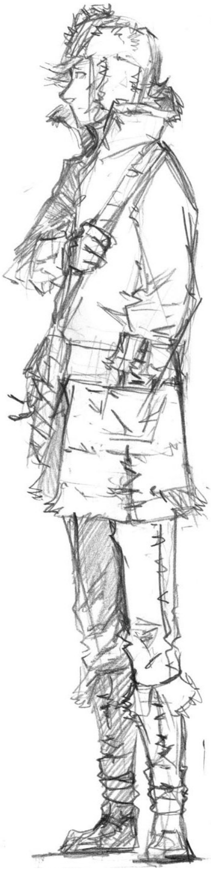


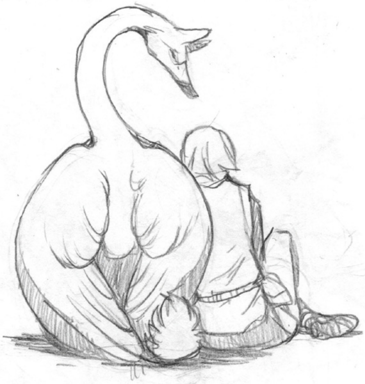


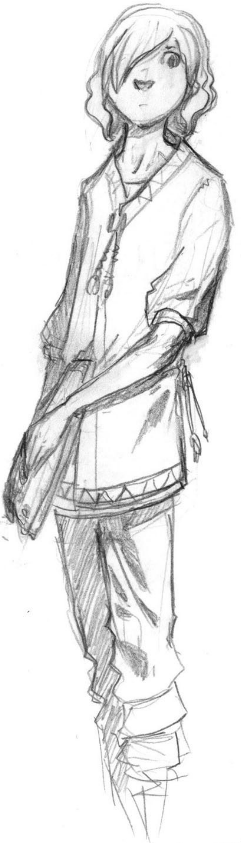


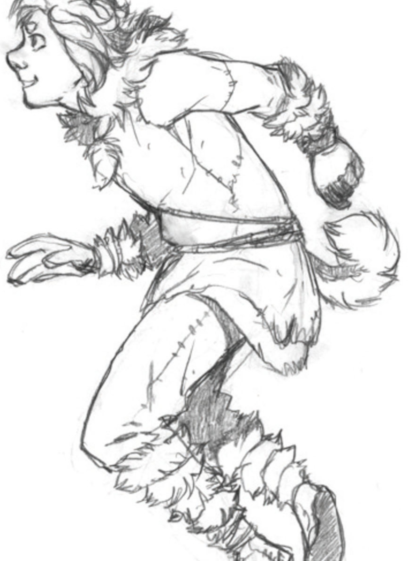


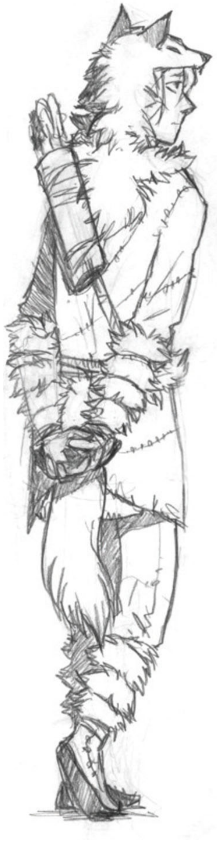


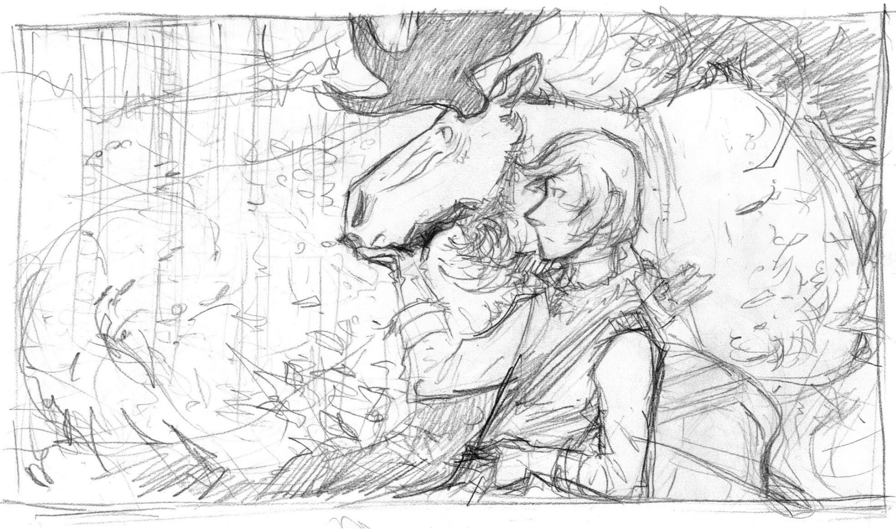


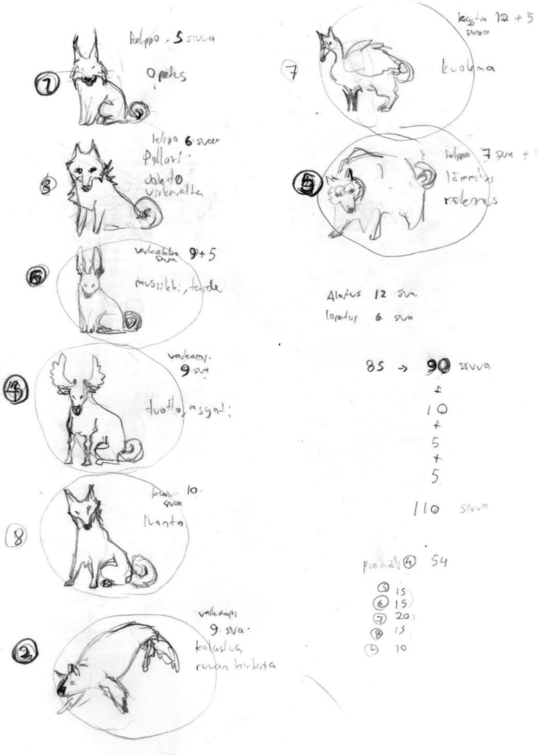












helppo - 5 sivua
Opetus
7
kuolema
kuusi 12 + 5 sivua
helppo 6 sivua
Pallavi
dokto
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3
helppo 7 sivua + 1
lämmitys
rakennus
5
6
vaikeahko 9 + 5 sivua
musiikki, taide
Alotus 12 siva
lopetus 6 siva
4
vaikeampi 9 siva
tuotto, asyn!
85 → 90 sivua
+
10
+
5
+
5
110 sivua
8
10 sivua
kanto
pienet ④ 54
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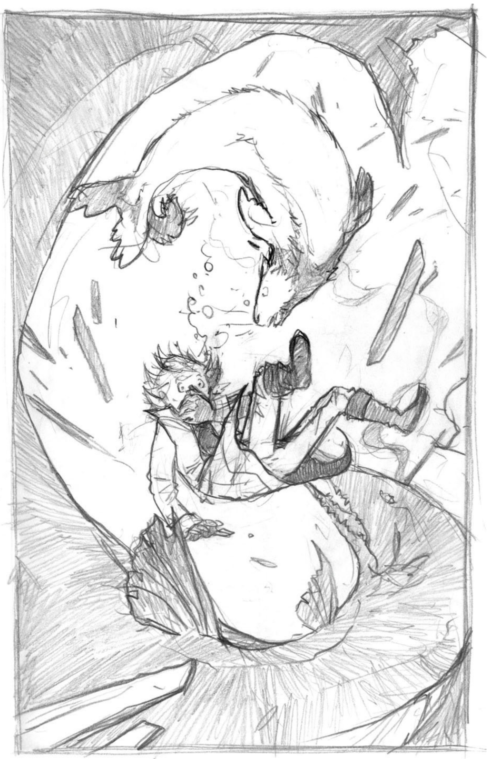
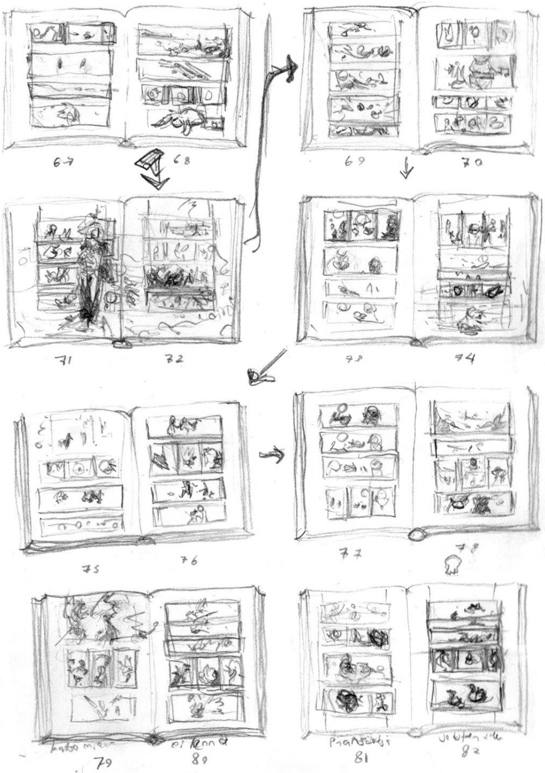
2
vaikeampi 9 siva
kalastus,
ruuan hankinta



Above: initial ideas for Ville's forms. Ah, one of my very few sketches from before starting the comic. With these little scribbles was trying to map out which animals Ville should turn into, what task would have to be done, how long the chapters should be and in which order they'd be. There's a lynx instead of a viper, a wolf instead of a squirrel and a fox instead of a human, but I ditched the lynx as I didn't feel very inspired by it, and a wolf would look too similar to Ville in his dog form. I was thinking of sticking with either the fox or dog as Ville's final form for a very long time, I didn't decide to switch over to human until I was working on the sixth chapter. But the last chapter would have been Puppy-Fox-hunting either way!

Top: My first sketch for the illustration on page 600.

Right: A sketch for an illustration that I never even started. In retrospect it looks like something that would have made a fine cover for chapter 3.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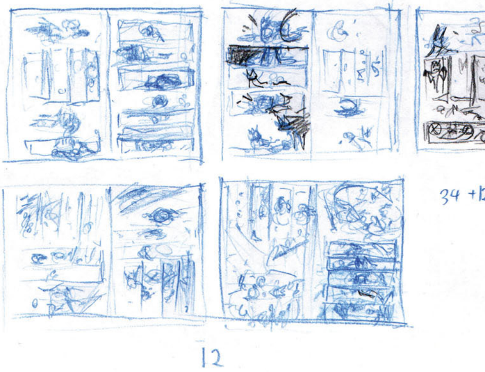
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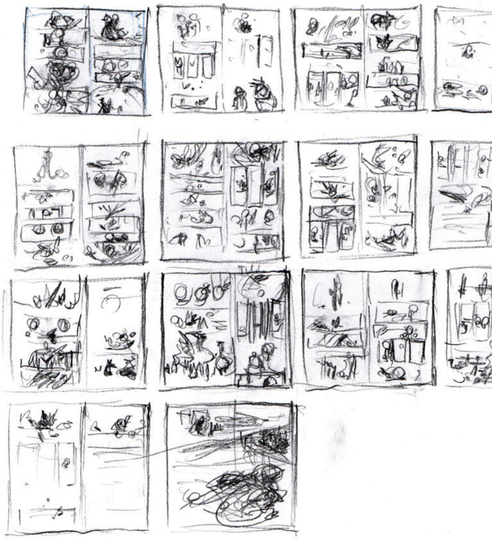
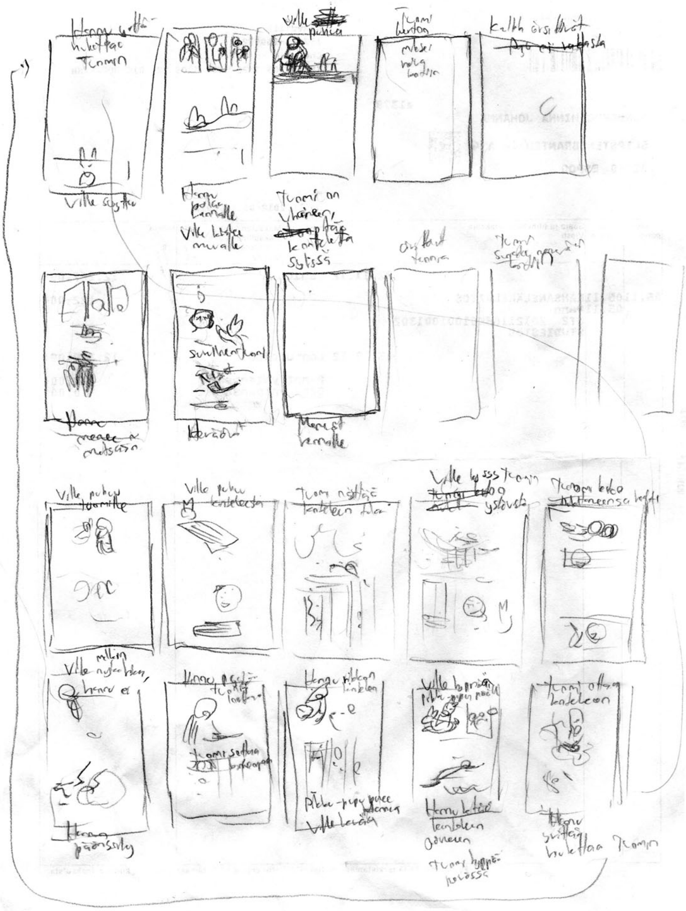
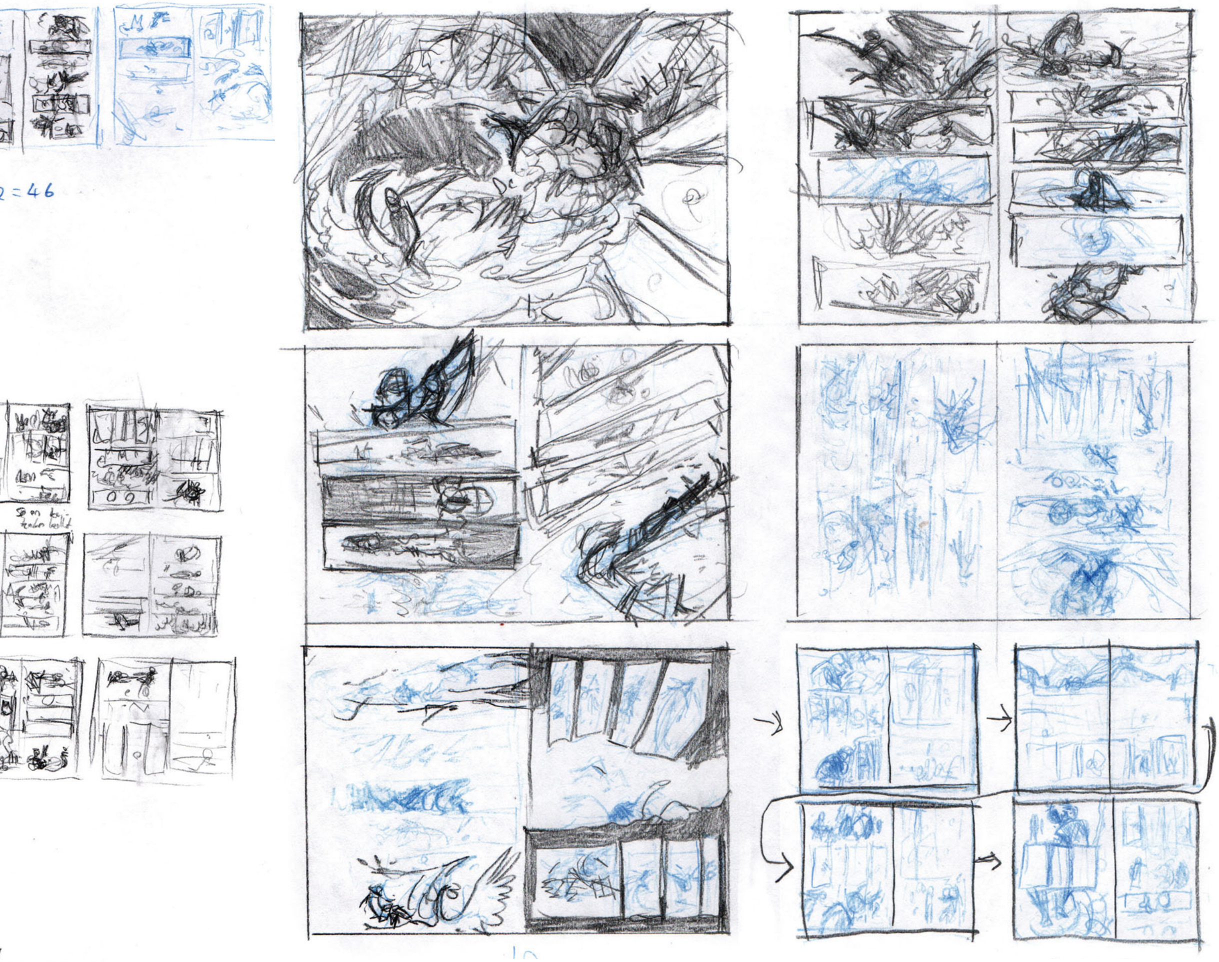
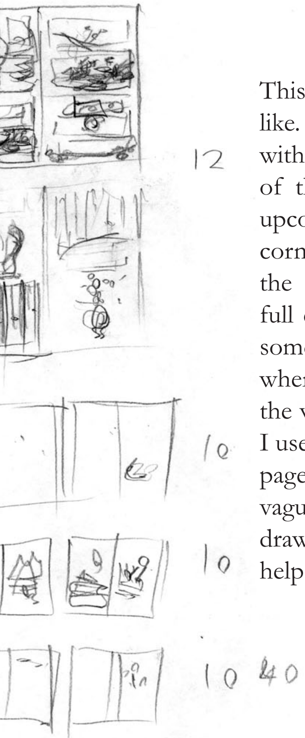



Hanna yrittää hukuttaa Tuomin
Ville syyttää
Ville puhuu
Tuomi herää
kaikki äiskä
Hanna puhuu Tuomille
Ville katsoo muualle
Tuomi on yksinään, pitää kanteletta sylissä
Tuomi
Hanna menee metsään
Herää
Menee kotiin
Ville puhuu Tuomille
Ville puhuu kanteleesta
Tuomi näyttää kanteleen
Ville kysyy Tuomin ystävistä
Ville nukkuu, Hanna ei
Hanna
Tuomi soittaa
Hanna ottaa kanteleen
Pikku-pupu puree Hannaa
Ville herää
Hanna
kanteleen
Tuomi hyppää
Tuomi ottaa kanteleen
Hanna yrittää kuristaa Tuomin



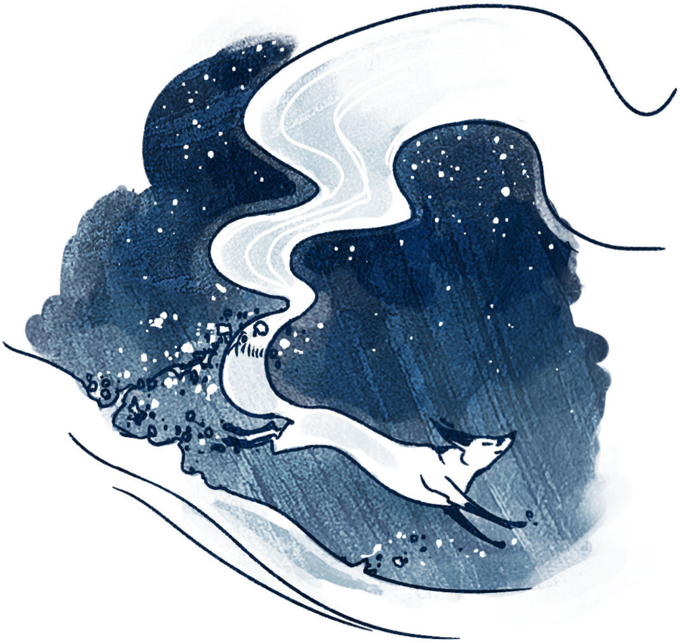


This is what my script for the comic looks like. I didn't write anything, I only worked with these kinds of thumbnail sketches of the pages when I was planning out an upcoming scene. The ones in the top left corner are from my very first script of the comic, covering the whole story the full eight chapters but in under 150 pages somehow. It was more of a mental exercise where I tried to visualize the framework of the whole story rather than something that I used as reference when drawing the actual pages. The sketches were far too small and vague for me to understand what I've even drawn on them later on, but drawing them helped me build a clear vision of the story in my mind.

The rest of the thumbnails are script snippets from various chapters, done as I approached a new key scene and needed to figure out the details of the events before starting to draw. When I already had a really clear vision in my mind I only drew very simple guidelines for with some notes (that I can't read), just to check that I hadn't forgotten anything from the scene. The thumbnails for these parts are so abstract that I can't even figure out which chapter they're for anymore! On many pages I didn't even bother to do a thumbnail script at all, occasionally I was simply that sure of what would happen on each page. And then there's some parts (like the one above) where I really needed the pacing and composition to be spot on, so I spent a little more time on the script sketches.

Mythology guide

I built a lot of "A Redtail's Dream" around some concepts from Finnish mythology, but I chose not to underline or explain them very much in the comic itself. I did, after all, use and bend the concepts to fit my own ideas, so I didn't see it necessary for the average reader to be familiar with the original myths. But here's a little guide for those of you who are unfamiliar with Finnish mythology and are curious about the tales that I was inspired by.

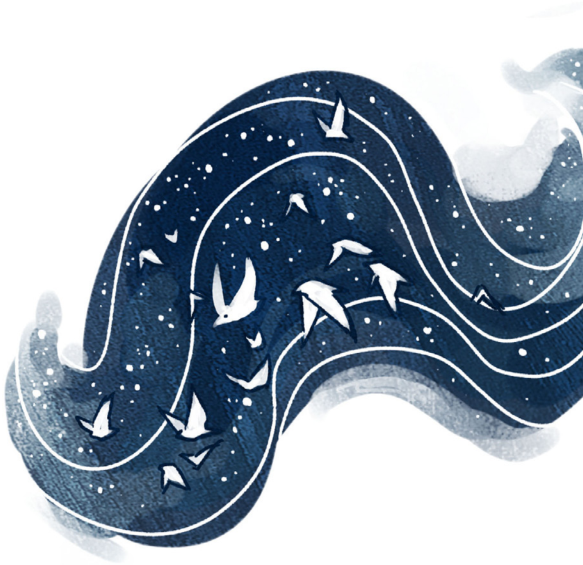


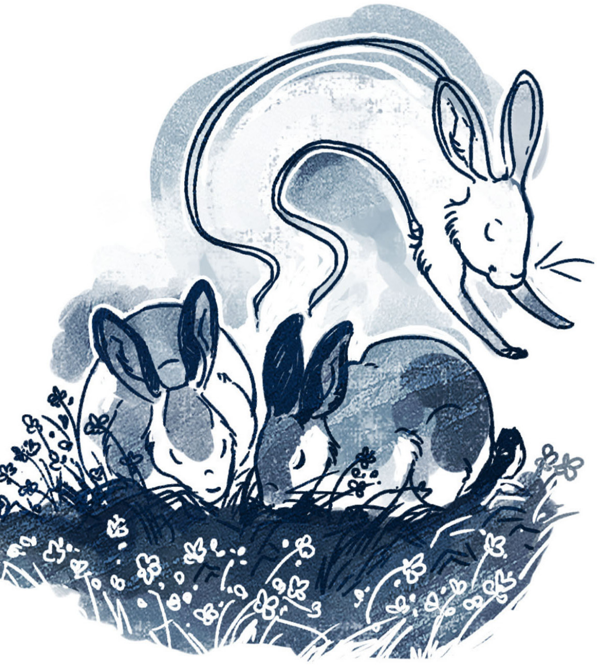
The Northern Lights, Fox fires, "Revontulet"

The Finnish word for the northern lights is "revontulet", which means "fox fires". One myth about the origin of the northern lights is this: the yearly meeting of the foxes was about to start, but embarrassingly one of them was running late. So the fox started running so fast that whenever his tail hit the snow sparks of fire and bits of ice would fly high up in the air and lit up the whole sky.

The Bird's Path, "Linnunrata"

The Milky Way is called Linnunrata in Finnish, which means "the Bird's Path", and it was believed that birds traveled through it to go from our world to the dream reality. The birds could carry the souls of those who were sleeping with them, and such a bird was called "sielulintu" (soul bird). A small wooden bird statuette could be kept next to someone who was sleeping so prevent their soul from being lost by the birds in the dream world. Birds were also believed to use the Bird's Path to travel south when winter came, to a mythological paradise land called "lintukoto" (the bird home) where it was always summer and peaceful. Humans could not go to "lintukoto", except occasionally in their dreams.





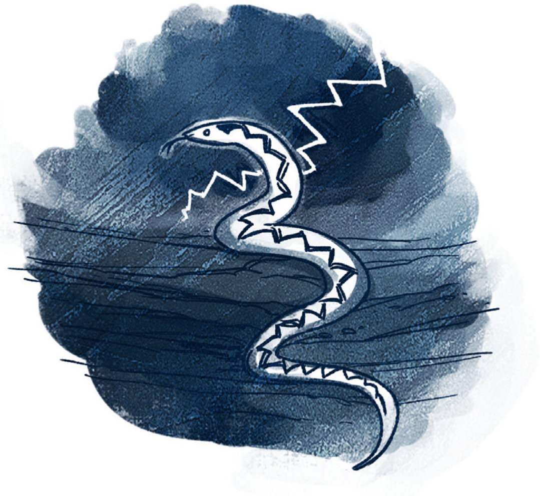
Spirit beings, “Haltija”

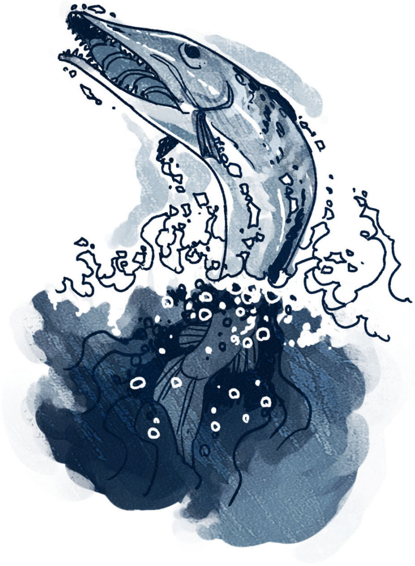
Most things were believed to have some kind of protective spirit creature, called “haltija”. Animals, trees, humans, buildings, objects, places, elements, most of them had a “haltija” of some sort. They were often invisible but capable of interacting with the physical world, and came in many different forms. They could be ghost-like, gnome-like, giants, shape-shifting animals, and some were more like gods than mere spirits. While many spirits didn’t pose a direct threat to humans a few would occasionally cause mischief and a some would even seek to harm those who entered their realm. Spirits that acted as a collective were called “väki”, which was typical for spirits of places (like forests) or elements (like fire).

The protective spirit of a human was called “luonto” (which means “nature” in modern Finnish), and a strong “luonto” could help one succeed in life, while a sick or disabled human had lost theirs. The spirit was not something people were born with; it would come to them in early childhood, and this was believed to be the reason why infants died so commonly. In modern Finnish the word “haltija” also means “keeper”, “owner” and “elf”.

The viper

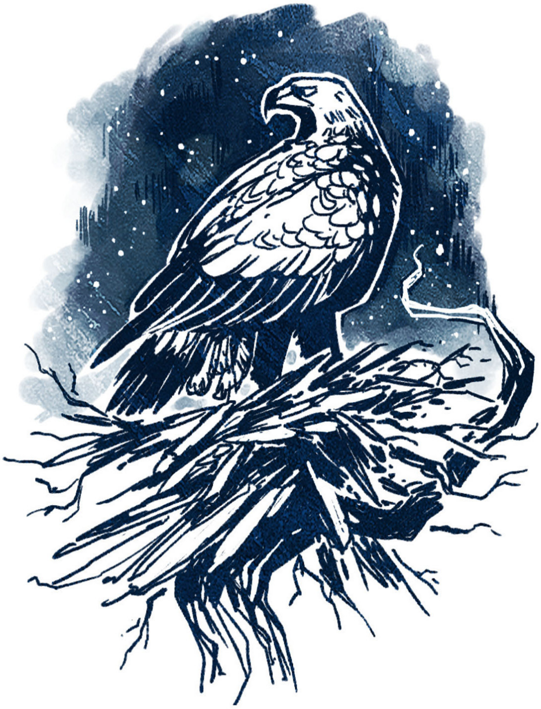
Because of the zig-zag markings that the viper has on its back it was thought to be an animal connected to lightning, and therefore also to the sky god Ukko, who caused thunderstorms together with his wife Akka. In the Kalevala the smith hero Ilmarinen is given several dangerous quests by the great northern sorceress Louhi, one of which is to plow a field covered in vipers.





The great pike

In one tale in the Kalevala the boat of Väinämöinen, the great sorcerer, gets stuck on the back of an enormous pike. The pike is killed and Väinämöinen builds the first kantele out of its jawbone. In another tale the smith hero Seppo Ilmarinen has to catch a great pike out of the river of Tuonela, which he does with the help of an eagle, called Kokko, which he created out of fire and iron.



Kokko

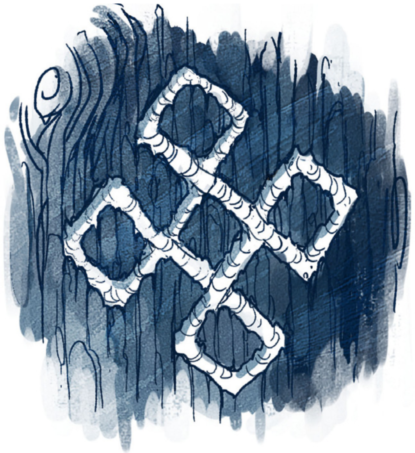
There are several mythological eagles in the Kalevala that are referred to as “kokko”, or alternatively “vaakalintu”. In one of the tales Väinämöinen is clearing a forest to create arable land, but decides to leave one great tree standing as a nesting place for birds. One day Kokko, described to have wings so large that one of them touches the sky and another one the lakes, arrives to the area. She is so thankful for the tree that she creates a blast of fire with her wings to help Vainämöinen clear the rest of the land. In a later story Väinämöinen is about to drown in the sea when Kokko arrives once again, still thankful for the nesting tree, and carries Väinämöinen to safety.

Another kokko-bird is the one made out of fire and iron by Ilmarinen, and the sorceress Louhi transforms herself into a kokko-bird made from iron and parts of a wooden ship to battle Väinämöinen at sea.. “Kokko” is the old Finnish word for “eagle”, while the modern word” is “kotka”. Nowadays “kokko” is specifically used to refer to a great mythological eagle, and “kokko” also means “bonfire”.

The Kalevala

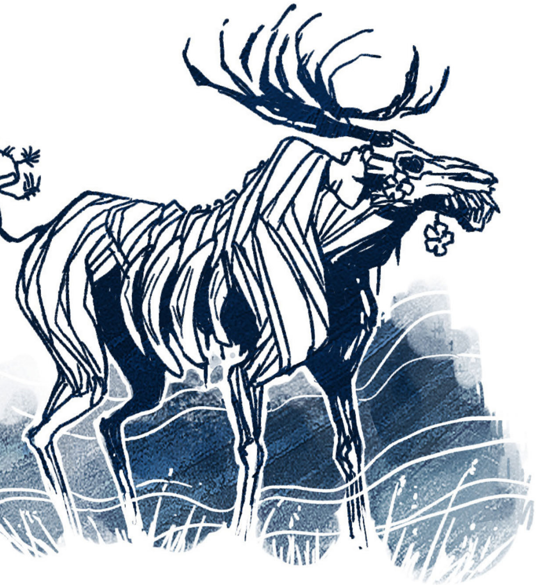
The Kalevala is the largest collection of Finnish mythology, and the national epic of Finland. In the 19th century the Fenno-Swede Elias Lönnrot traveled across Finland collecting and writing down the oral tradition of the local’s, adjusting the language of the poems to a uniform dialect and arranging them into a coherent storyline, creating the Kalevala.

The Kalevala is written entirely in “runo” format, a poem style indigenous to Finnic people that’s often referred to as “Kalevala metre”. Since a written form of Finnish wasn’t even created until the 16th century Finnish myths were passed along from one generation to another by singing them in this “runo” form.



Hannunvaakuna

A pre-christian symbol that was used in Finland to bring good luck and to ward off evil spirits, often used in embroidery, carved into wooden or metal objects or simply used as a painted decoration. “ Hannunvaakuna” means “seal of Hannu” and is a post-christian name. A non-christian name for the symbol is “käpälikkö”, meaning “paw mark”.



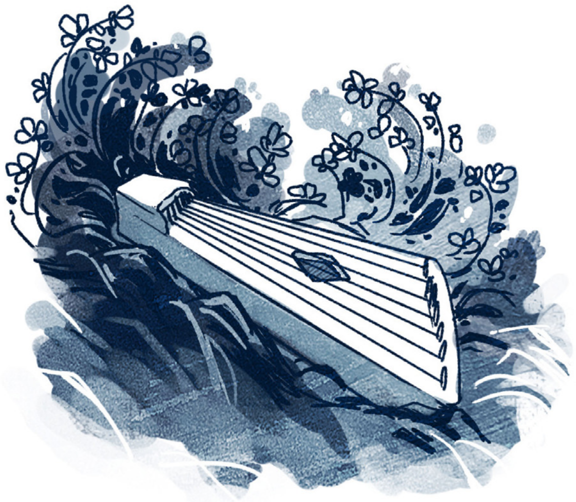
The moose of Hiisi, “Hiiden hirvi”

The moose of Hiisi is a creature built by small hiisi-creatures on behalf of the great Hiisi. Its body was put together from branches and rotting wood, the eyes were made out of a water lily’s flowers and its ears out of the water lily’s leaves. The hero Lemminkäinen had to catch the moose as a quest given to him by the sorceress Louhi.

The word “hiisi” has many possible meanings. It can refer to a giant, a small malicious troll-like creature, a sacred place, a hell-like place or an evil spirit. “Painu hiiteen” (go to hiisi) is a Finnish equivalent of “go to hell”, while “Hiisi vieköön” means “may one/you/it be taken by a Hiisi”. A synonym of “hiisi” is “hitto”, which is commonly used as a mild curse word..

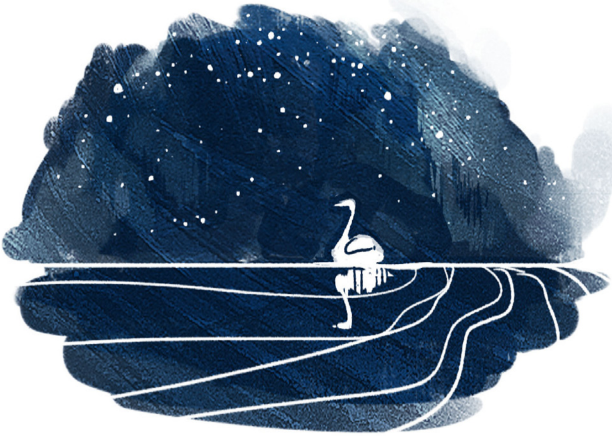
The Kantele

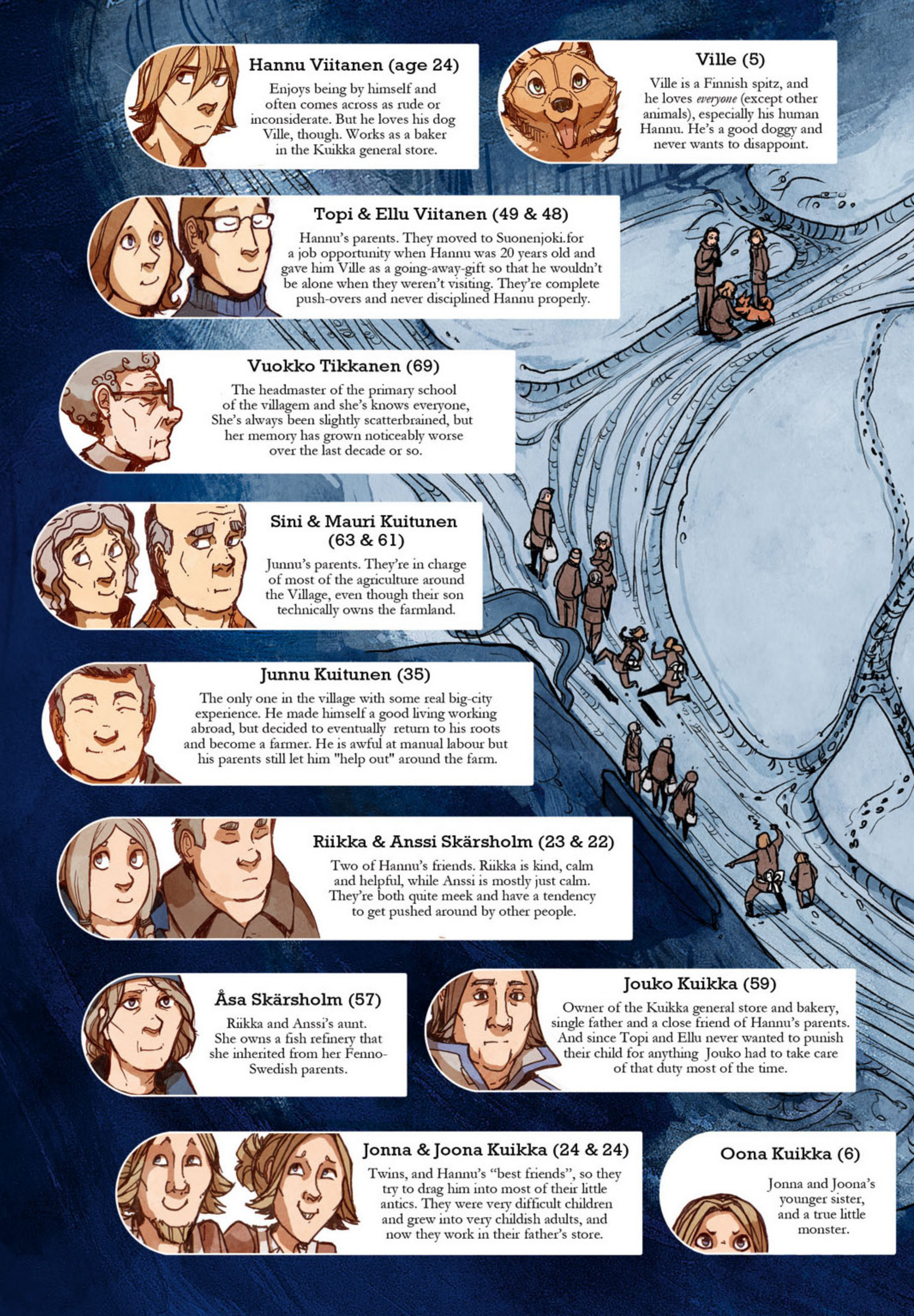
The kantele is a string instrument that according to Finnish myth can aid in the casting of spells. The first Kantele was built by Väinämöinen out of the jaw bone of a great pike and mane hair from the horse of Hiisi was used as the strings. The first Kantele was lost at sea during a show-down between Väinämöinen and Louhi (who had turned herself into a mechanical eagle). The second one was made out of a crying birch tree who was very unhappy about its life, to whom Väinämöinen promised to give it a new, more joyful life. This time the strings were strands of hair given by a maiden, and the second Kantele became even more powerful than the first one.



Tuonela

Tuonela is the Finnish afterlife where all Finns go regardless of what they did during their life. It is not clear exactly what kind of place it is, except that it’s cold, dark, and people there sleep eternally without dreaming. Therefore Tuonela is also called “ikiunen valtakunta”, the realm of eternal sleeep. The ruler of Tuonela is Tuoni, but yet another word for Tuonela is Manala, in which case the ruler is called Mana. Great shamans were able to enter Tuonela in their sleep to visit the dead, but in order to get there they had to cross the black river where the Swan of Tuonela lives, and anyone attempting to harm or kill it would die themselves.





Hannu Viitanen (age 24)

Enjoys being by himself and often comes across as rude or inconsiderate. But he loves his dog Ville, though. Works as a baker in the Kuikka general store.

Ville (5)

Ville is a Finnish spitz, and he loves *everyone* (except other animals), especially his human Hannu. He's a good doggy and never wants to disappoint.

Topi & Ellu Viitanen (49 & 48)

Hannu's parents. They moved to Suonenjoki.for a job opportunity when Hannu was 20 years old and gave him Ville as a going-away-gift so that he wouldn't be alone when they weren't visiting. They're complete push-overs and never disciplined Hannu properly.

Vuokko Tikkanen (69)

The headmaster of the primary school of the villagem and she's knows everyone, She's always been slightly scatterbrained, but her memory has grown noticeably worse over the last decade or so.

Sini & Mauri Kuitunen (63 & 61)

Junnu's parents. They're in charge of most of the agriculture around the Village, even though their son technically owns the farmland.

Junnu Kuitunen (35)

The only one in the village with some real big-city experience. He made himself a good living working abroad, but decided to eventually return to his roots and become a farmer. He is awful at manual labour but his parents still let him "help out" around the farm.

Riikka & Anssi Skärsholm (23 & 22)

Two of Hannu's friends. Riikka is kind, calm and helpful, while Anssi is mostly just calm. They're both quite meek and have a tendency to get pushed around by other people.

Åsa Skärsholm (57)

Riikka and Anssi's aunt. She owns a fish refinery that she inherited from her Fenno-Swedish parents.

Jouko Kuikka (59)

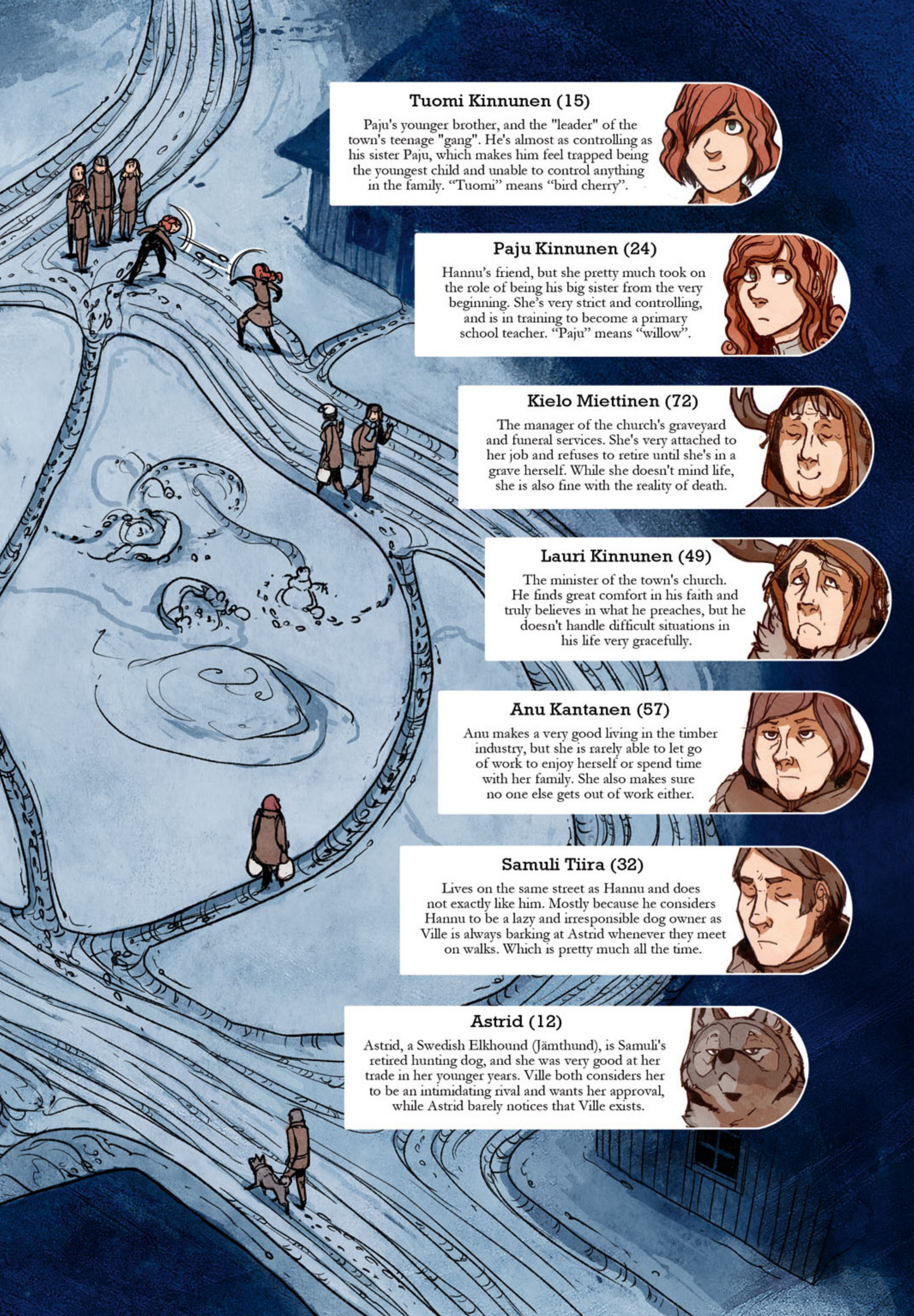
Owner of the Kuikka general store and bakery, single father and a close friend of Hannu's parents. And since Topi and Ellu never wanted to punish their child for anything Jouko had to take care of that duty most of the time.

Jonna & Joona Kuikka (24 & 24)

Twins, and Hannu's "best friends", so they try to drag him into most of their little antics. They were very difficult children and grew into very childish adults, and now they work in their father's store.

Oona Kuikka (6)

Jonna and Joona's younger sister, and a true little monster.



Tuomi Kinnunen (15)

Paju's younger brother, and the "leader" of the town's teenage "gang". He's almost as controlling as his sister Paju, which makes him feel trapped being the youngest child and unable to control anything in the family. "Tuomi" means "bird cherry".

Paju Kinnunen (24)

Hannu's friend, but she pretty much took on the role of being his big sister from the very beginning. She's very strict and controlling, and is in training to become a primary school teacher. "Paju" means "willow".

Kielo Miettinen (72)

The manager of the church's graveyard and funeral services. She's very attached to her job and refuses to retire until she's in a grave herself. While she doesn't mind life, she is also fine with the reality of death.

Lauri Kinnunen (49)

The minister of the town's church. He finds great comfort in his faith and truly believes in what he preaches, but he doesn't handle difficult situations in his life very gracefully.

Anu Kantanen (57)

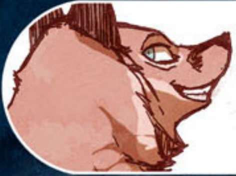
Anu makes a very good living in the timber industry, but she is rarely able to let go of work to enjoy herself or spend time with her family. She also makes sure no one else gets out of work either.

Samuli Tiira (32)

Lives on the same street as Hannu and does not exactly like him. Mostly because he considers Hannu to be a lazy and irresponsible dog owner as Ville is always barking at Astrid whenever they meet on walks. Which is pretty much all the time.

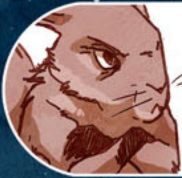
Astrid (12)

Astrid, a Swedish Elkhound (Jämthund), is Samuli's retired hunting dog, and she was very good at her trade in her younger years. Ville both considers her to be an intimidating rival and wants her approval, while Astrid barely notices that Ville exists.



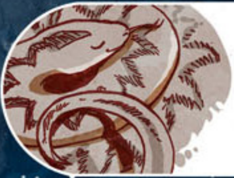
Puppy-Fox

The youngest member of the Fox clan, and is rather immature for his age. His fellow Fox clan memebers prefer not to put him in charge of *anything*, because he tends to ruin *everything*. Sometimes even on purpose, and he will *not* apologize.



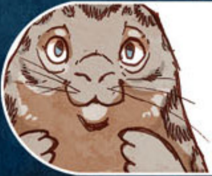
Mrs. Squirrel

An old grumpy matriarch who keeps a stern eye on all the younger spirits.



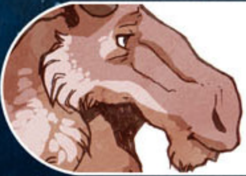
Mr. Viper

A very laid back spirit who prefers to take long naps instead of working.



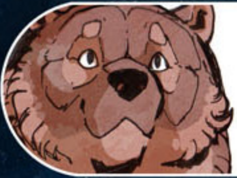
Ms. Seal

A kind and cheerful spirit who is always heppy to help out if she can. Unfortunately she's not too brave and gets traumatized easily.



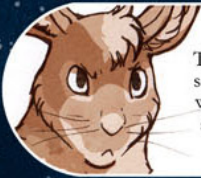
Mr. Moose

One of the oldest and mightiest spirits around. He tries to protect and defend those who are too small or meek to do it themselves.



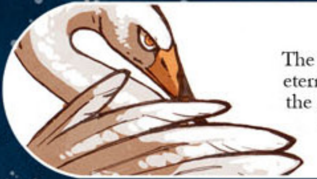
Mr. Bear

He's big and mighty, but doesn't know how to stand up for himself, so he tends to get bossed around by some of the smaller, more assertive spirits.



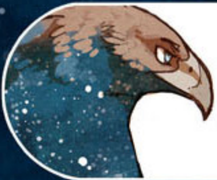
Little Hare

The youngest of the Hares, so he never gets taken seriously. Occasionally his parents even forget him when they're counting their many, many children, and his older siblings don't always include him in their games as he's "just a baby".



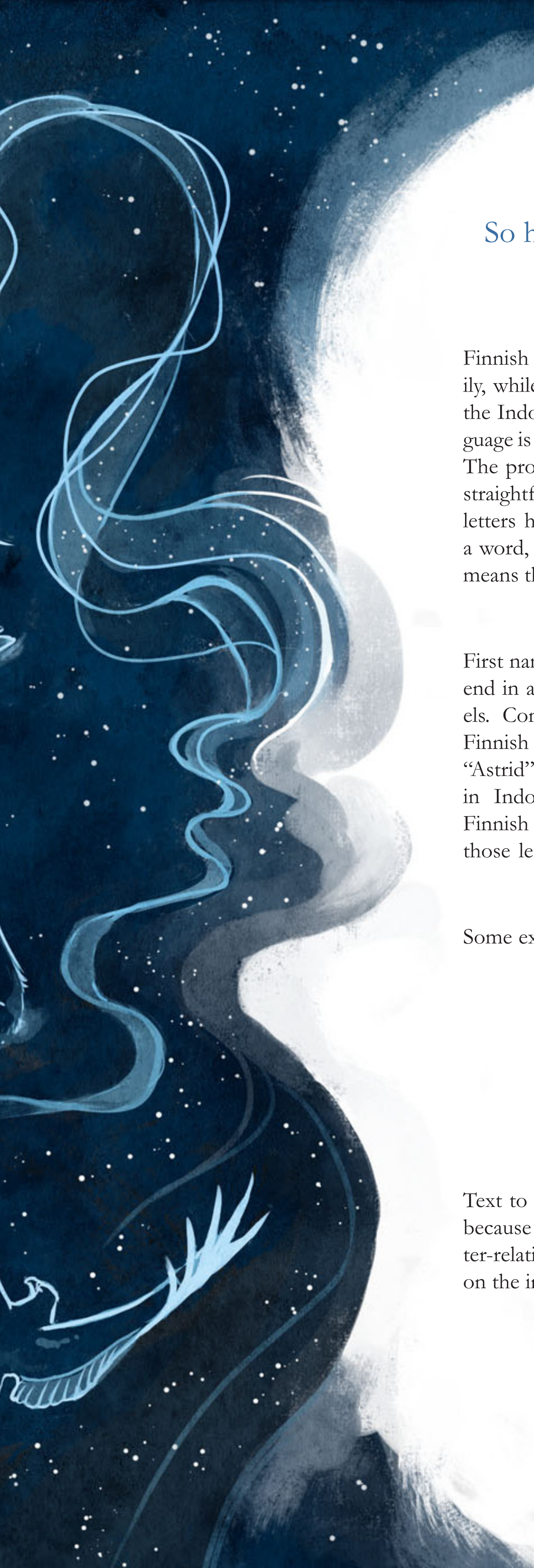
The Swan of Tuonela

The Swan of Tuonela guards the realm of eternal sleep and makes sure the souls of the dead may rest in peace. She's always swamped with work and slightly on edge from the stress.



Kokko

An old, majestic eagle who keeps an watchful eye on the Bird's Path, making sure no weird things are going on. She's very fond of mortals in general and loves to help out those in need.



So how are the names of the characters pronounced?

Finnish belongs to the Finno-Ugric (Uralic) language family, while almost all the other European languages belong to the Indo-European one. That's why the structure of the language is quite different from, say, English, Russian or Swedish. The pronunciation of Finnish , however, is very simple and straightforward. The stress is always put on the first syllable, letters have the same sound regardless of the placement in a word, there are no silent letters, and a double letter simply means that the sound is a little bit longer than that of a single letter.

First names of Finnish origin typically have two syllables and end in a vowel sound, but a few names do have three vowels. Consonant clusters are typically avoided and very rare in Finnish (while they are common in Swedish, like in the names "Astrid" and "Skärsholm"). A lot of sounds that are common in Indo-European languages don't even exist natively in the Finnish language, such as the sounds b, c, f, g, q, w and z, and those letters are only included in the alphabet to help spell loan words and foreign names.

Some examples of the syllable division and stress of Finnish names:

HAN-nu VIL-le

PA-ju KUIK-ka

A-nu SA-mu-li

Text to speech engines for Finnish are often rather accurate because of the simplicity and uniformity of the sound to letter-relation of the language, so I recommend looking one up on the internet if you wish to find out how the names of the characters are pronounced.

Reader art

In the fall of 2013, during the final parts of "A Redtail's Dream"'s run online, I decided to throw a simple fanart contest for the readers of the comic. Contestants had a month to draw and submit their piece to the content, and I have to say that I was absolutely astounded by the amount of entries: over 130! Picking out only a few winners out of so many submissions was a difficult task, but it had to be made.

The three winners and the six honorary mentions are included here in this book on the following pages. I was originally only going to pick three or four honorary mentions, but with so many great entries I simply was not able to contain myself. In fact, I would have liked to pick at least half a dozen more, but I had to draw the line somewhere. I hope you enjoy these awesome pieces of art as much as I have!

On the final page of the reader art section is a runo-style poem about the battle between Hannu and The Swan of Tuonela in chapter 7, written in the kalevala metre by the very talented **Mikko Ojala**. The poem is presented in both its Finnish version and with its English translation.

You can view all of the fanart submissions and more fan poems at:
www.minnasundberg.fi/fanart.php

The winning artists

1st place: Cheppoly managed to do something I never did: to draw pretty much all the characters in the comic in one single shot. It's simply a scene that I can't look at without smiling a little bit.
www.cheppo.tumblr.com

2nd place (shared): Etebalfana created a distinctive-looking piece that truly speaks to my graphic designer's heart. Few, carefully balanced colors and a simple but powerful composition.
www.etebalfana.deviantart.com

2nd place (shared): Karbik went ahead and drew the long coveted mecha-dragon-Ville (with rider Hannu, of course) in a beautiful, iconic Finnish lake setting.
www.karbikworks.tumblr.com

Honorary Mentions

Eren Fitzgerald's piece really shows the deep friendship between Hannu and Ville in a simple, genuine and heartfelt gesture.
www.tamurancomic.com

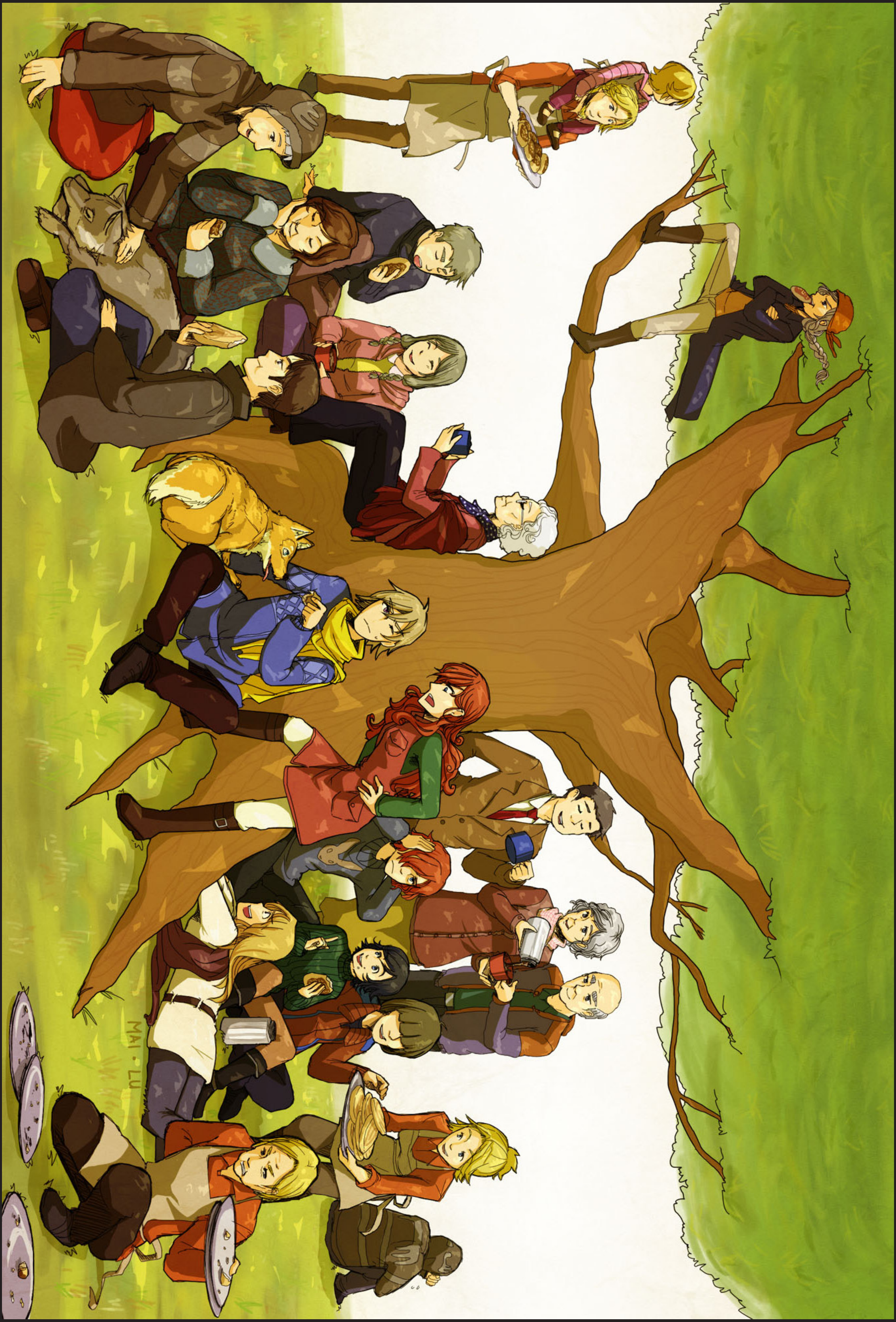
Jenna Lolandi's entry is a stellar piece in the style of art-nouveau.
www.jloli.deviantart.com

Sarah "Chu" Wilson's piece is humorous, adorable and has some pretty darn amazing colors.
www.sdamned.com

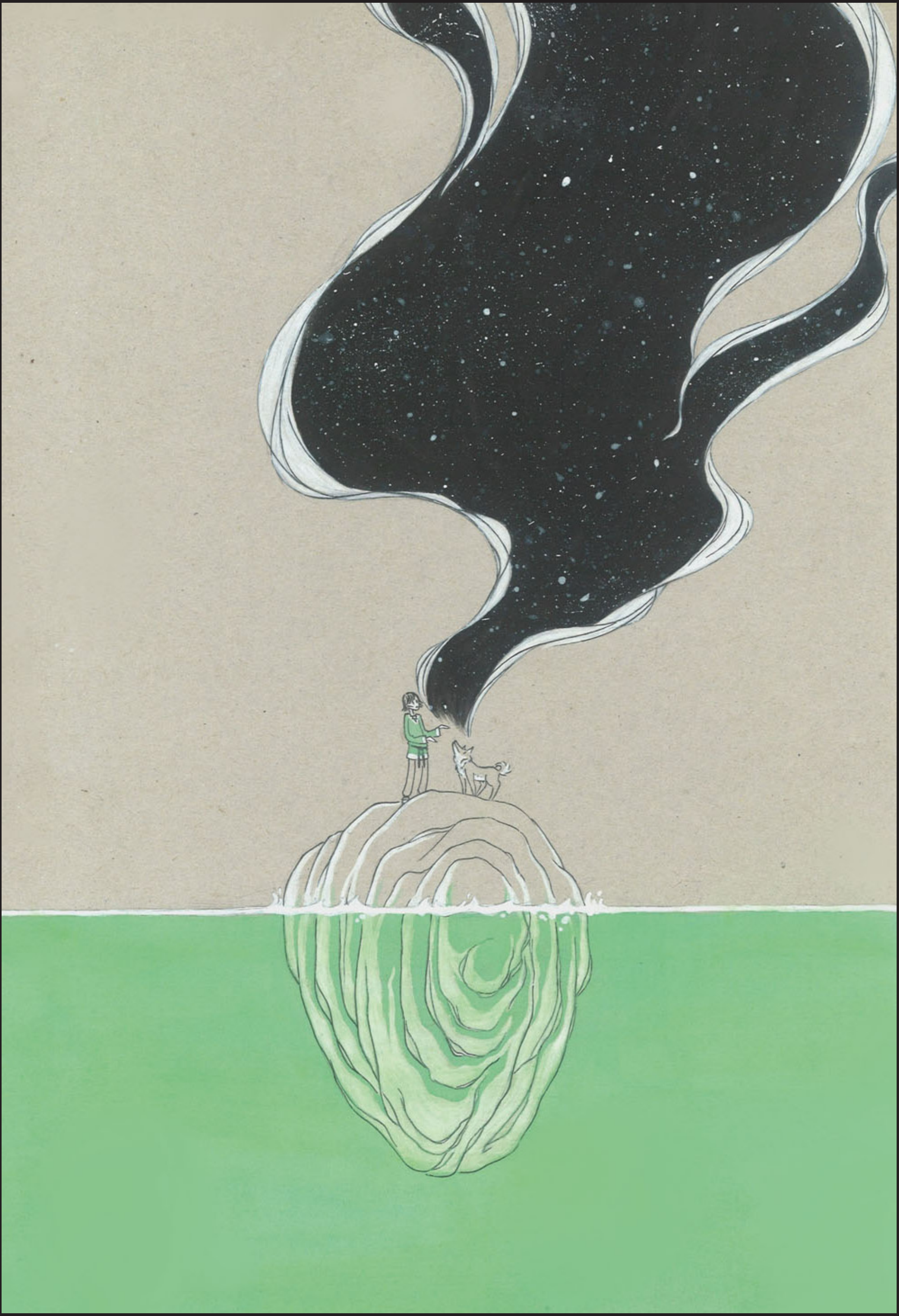
Kristine Synowka's piece is simply beautiful, and so fun to look at! Astrid looks so happy running alongside bear-Ville, and even the ravens are joyful.
www.ninthrunswild.com

Lily She-Yin has depicted a humorous scene where Puppy-Fox has been banned from the Fox-meetings, so he goes to steal buns from the Chinese zodiak meeting instead.

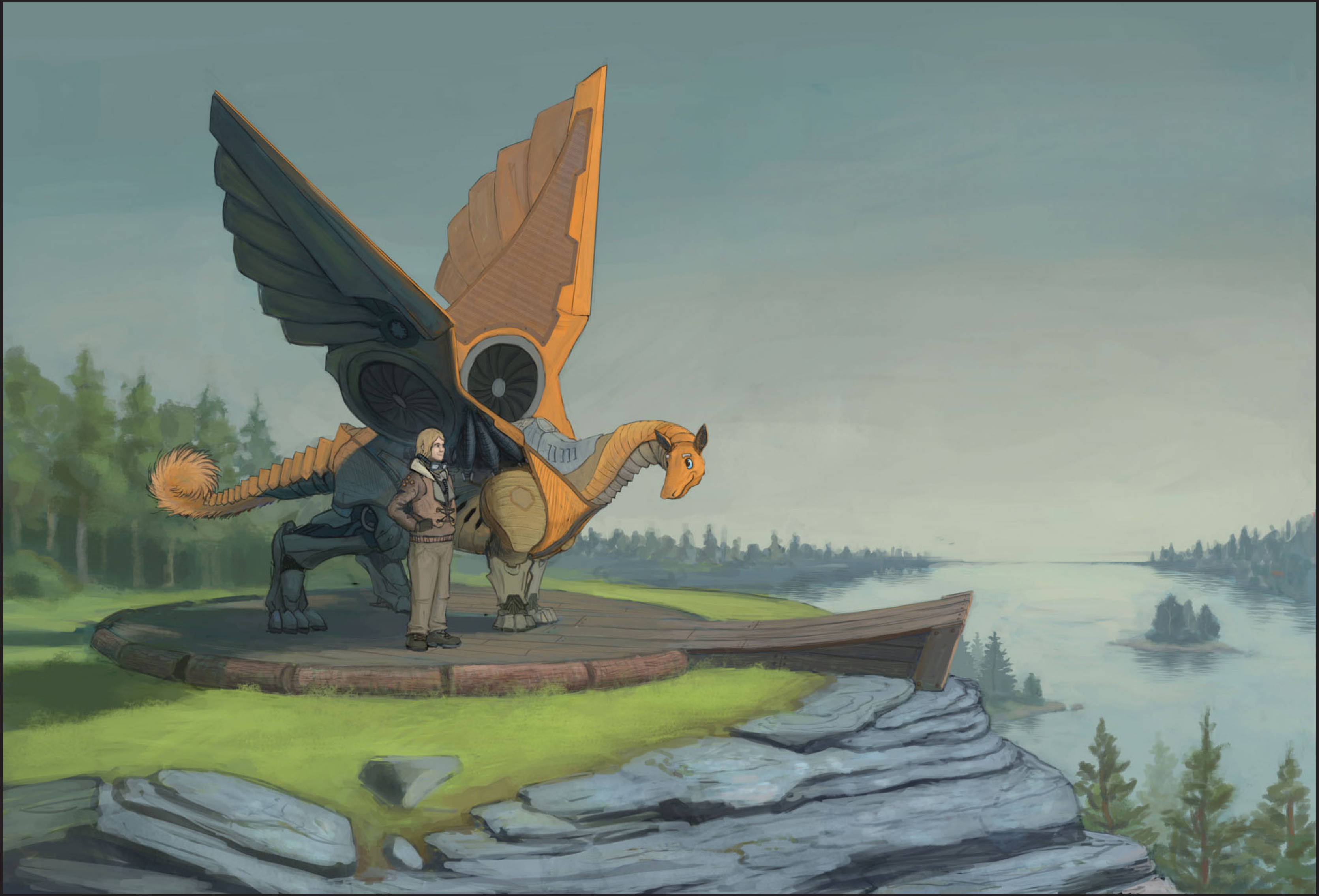
Tiffany's piece is both sad and beautiful, and full of small details.
www.zinfer.deviantart.com



1at place · Cheppoly



Shared 2nd place · Etebalfana

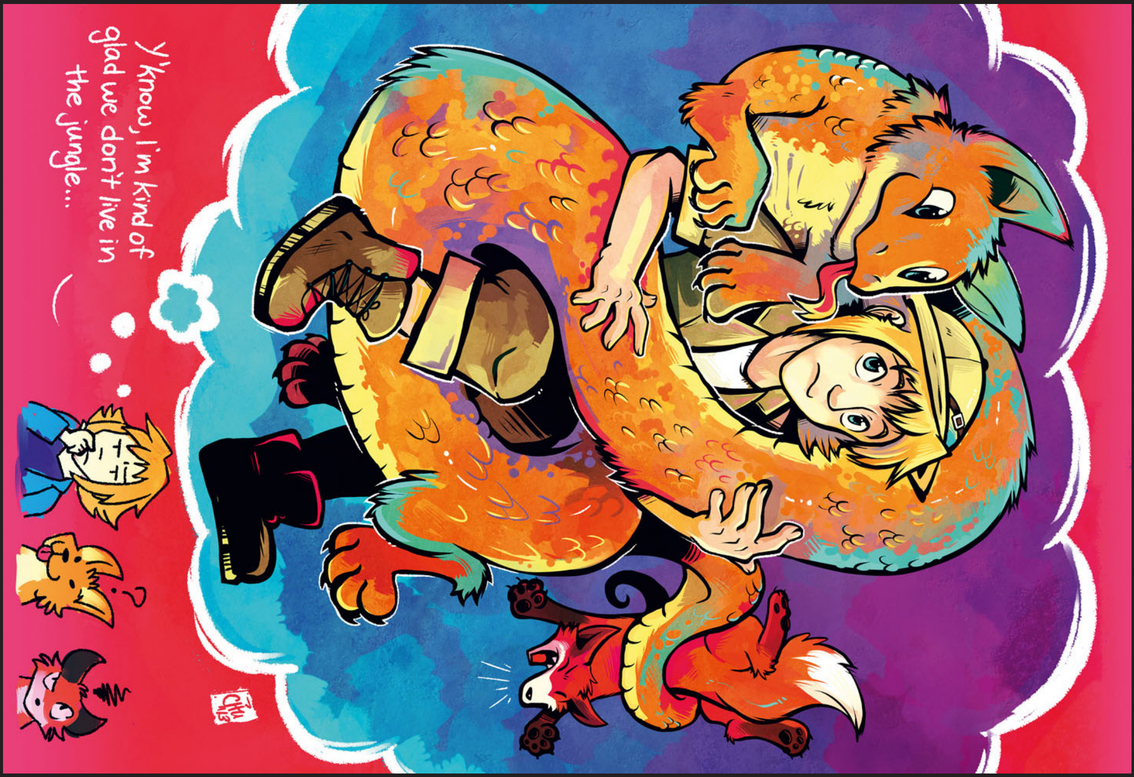


Shared 2nd place · Karbik

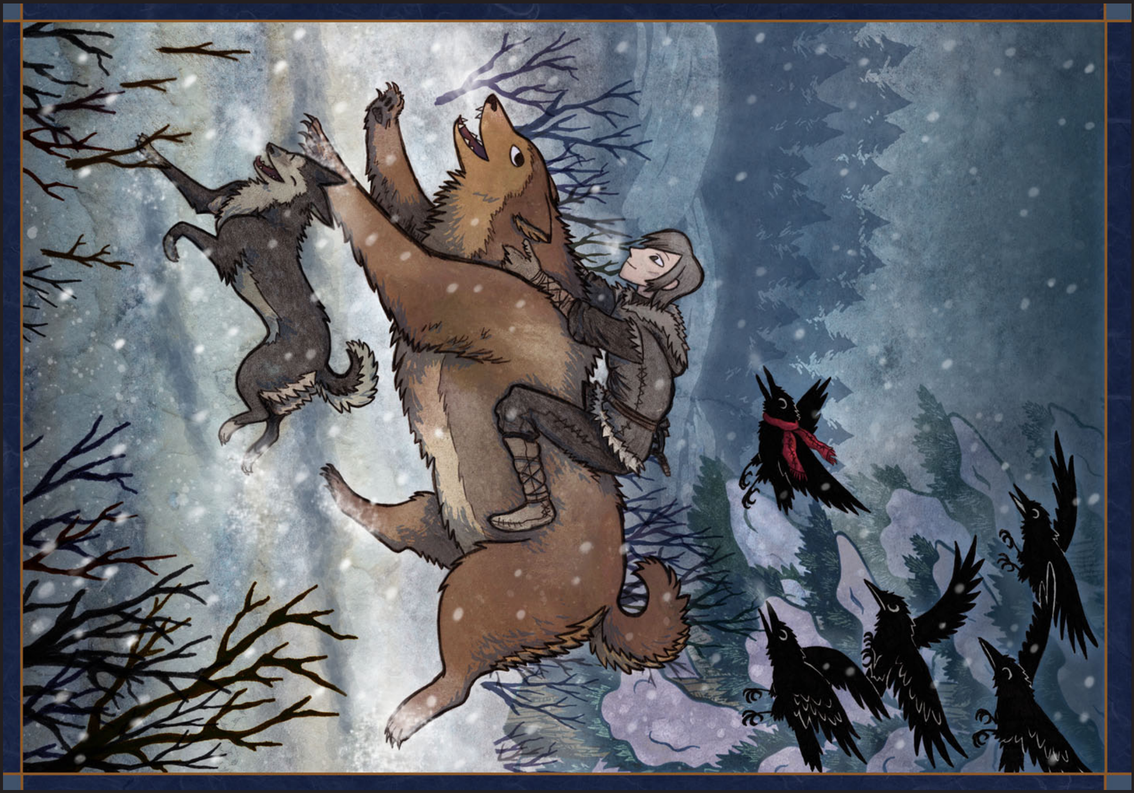
Honorary mention · Eren Fitzgerald

Puppy~Fox
A Redtail's Dream
hannu & ville

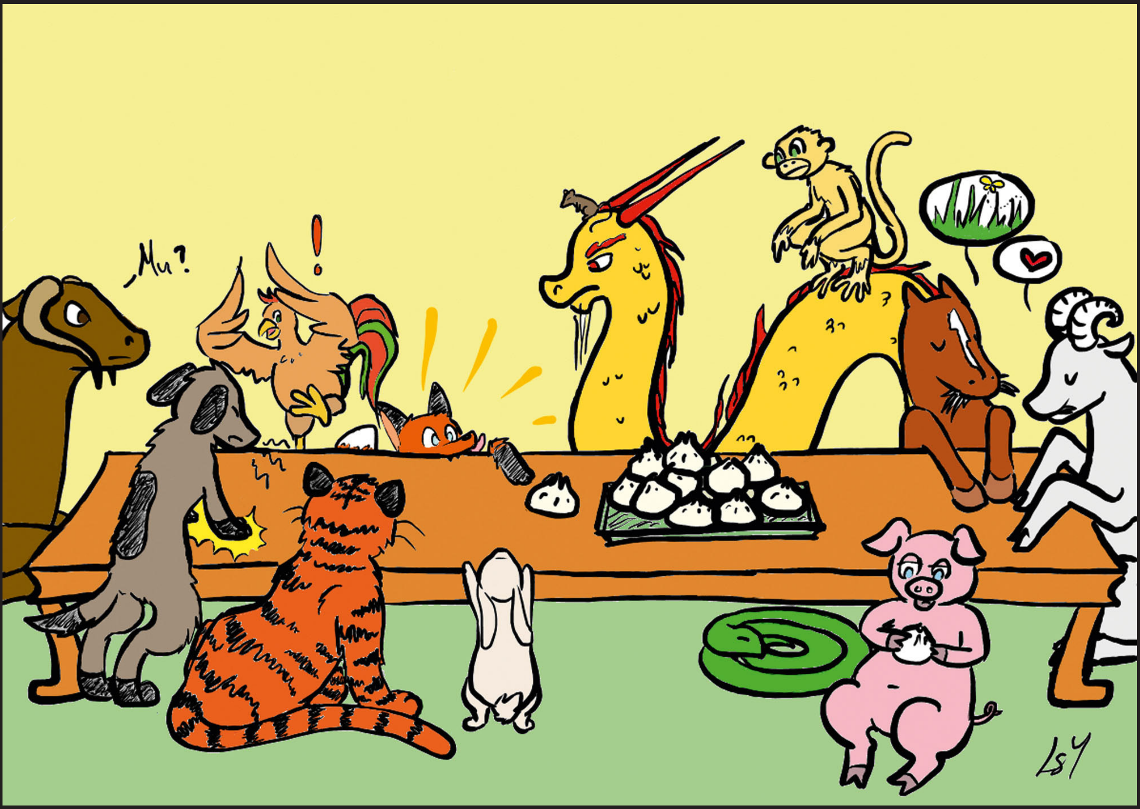
Honorary mention · Jenna Lolandi


Y'know, I'm kind of glad we don't live in the jungle...

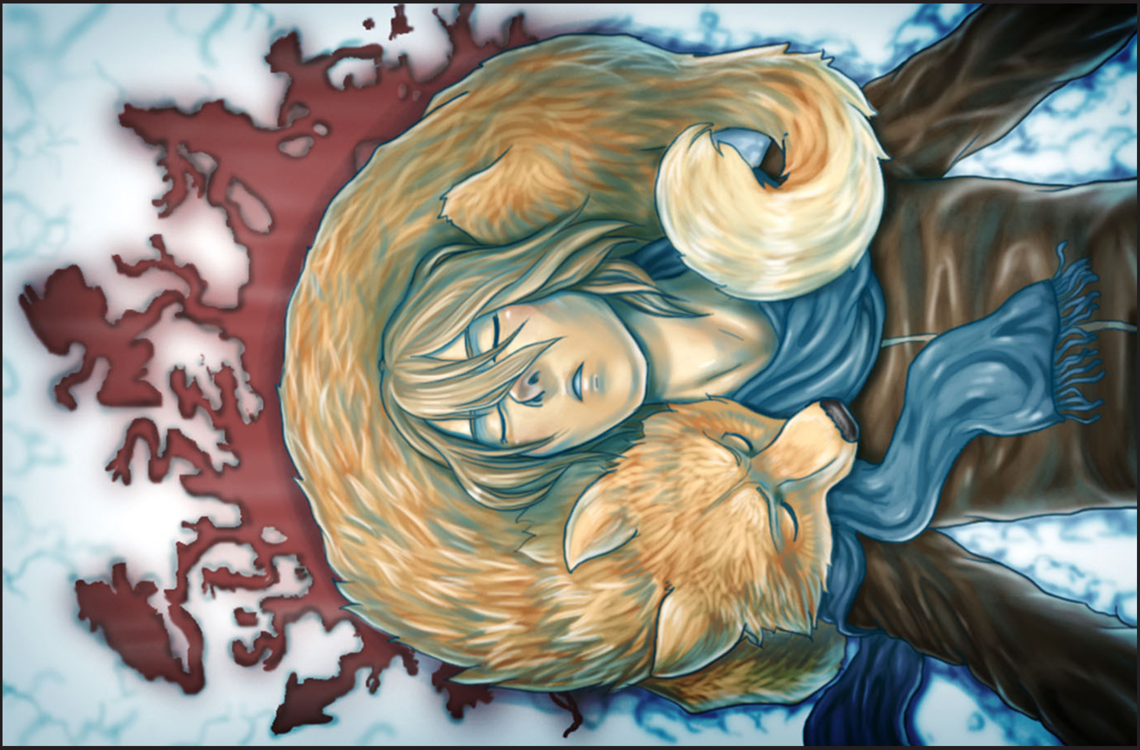
Honorary mention · Sarah ‘Chu’ Wilson



Honorary mention · Kristine Synowka



Honorary mention · Lily She-Yin



Honorary mention · Tiffany

Tuonelan joutsenen tuho • *The Fall of the Swan of Tuonela*

Mikko Ojala

Kalvas Tuonen tuima lintu,
Valkosiipi hyisen virran,
muuttihe muotonsa sorean,
valahutti höyhenviitan,
kalman kauhuksi kohosi,
varjot yllensä yleni.

Muuttui silloin Tuonen joutsen,
muotons’ inhaksi isosi:
Veri valui kyljen alta,
leuat nokasta yleni,
kynnet kasvoi kuolon kurjen,
siivet vääräksi värähti.

Tuoneen syöksi poian nuoren,
sysiveden synkän alle.
Häntä seuras’ kalman lintu,
joutsen Tuonelan sukelsi,
lihaa koitti hampain riistää,
riipiä rautakidalla.

Iski Hannu vimman veitsen
kuolon kurjen kaulan kantaan
Mutt’ ei kaula katkennunna,
joutsen julma kaikonnunna.

Iski kerran, iski toisen,
iski kerran kolmannenkin,
vaan ei kuoloksi ojennut,
lintu kalman kadonnunna.

Neljännen kun kerran iski,
poikki seljän, poikki luiden,
poikki kaulankin kamalan,
kiinni linnun luiden alle,
terä kärjestä karahti.

Väänsi voimin kaikin Hannu,
muttei luista luiden mahti,
vaan ei järky jänteen voima.
Vastoin poikki paukahteli,
veitsi vaskinen vavahti,
kärki puukolta putosi,
niskan taakse katkeavi.

That pale grim-faced bird of Tuoni
Whitewing of the hoary waters,
swiftly changed her form so graceful,
let her cloak of feathers fall down,
rose as terror dead and deadly,
above her shadows grew and darkened.

Transformed swift the Swan of Tuoni,
she now grew to visage foulest:
Blood ran down beneath her sides and
beak such vicious jaws they sprouted,
claws grew on this crane so deadly,
wings so white were gloomy twisted.

To the Tuoni fell this young boy,
under waters blackest gloomy,
where him followed vulture deadly,
Swan of Tuoni dived in pursuit,
tried to pierce him with fangs cruellest,
rend his flesh with jaws of iron.

Hannu struck with blade in fury
at the neck of crane so deadly
but this neck it would not shatter
swan so cruel it did not depart.

Once he struck and twice he smote it,
even slashed it for the third time,
still would death refuse to take it
did not flee this bird of Tuoni.

As he for the fourth time struck it
across the back and bones he hacked it,
in the neck oh horror shrouded,
under bones of bird of Tuoni,
blade was caught and there it held fast.

All with might he weapon twisted,
but can’t shatter bones so mighty,
but can’t sever sinews doughty.
Lo instead the knife was splintered,
edge of brass now moaning shattered,
broke off sharp point from the weapon,
lodged behind the neck left standing.

Silloin Tuonen tuima lintu,
joutsen tummien vesien,
kiinnitti kitansa kamalan,
hampahista suurisuisen,
rintaan sankarin sorean,
tämän Tuoneen viedäksensä,
veteen tummaan tuodaksensa,
tuonne ikiunen maille,
kuoleman syntysijoille.

Syöksyi Ville, kelpo koira,
sukelsihe aaltoin alle,
poikaparan pelastaakseen,
sankarmielen siepatakseen
poies kuoleman kidasta,
syvistä sysivesistä,
syöveristä Tuonen tumman.

Iski halli haavaan veitsen,
iski rankaan linnun ruojan,
niskaanpa veripetoa,
puri linnun kaulan kantaan,
miss’ ol’ kärki puukon päästä,
haavat jo Hannun tekemät.

Kävi koira uskollinen,
kiinni Tuonen tuiman linnun,
kalmasta kauhean lihoihin.
Voimin väänsi, voimin käänsi,
mahdin kaikkensa kokosi,
nokalla niskoja mursi,
järkytteli jäntehiä.

Silloin murtui luiden mahti,
silloin järkkyi jänteen voima,
antoi ankara periksi.
Kaulan kannat katkeavi,
hurme kurkusta pirisi,
verivirrat vieriskeli,
pää tuo pedolta putosi,
irtosihe pitkäkaulan,
Tuonen tuiman kalmolinnun.

Niin sai voiton kelpo koira
Ville Tuonen joutsenesta.
Hannun aalloista pelasti,
kuolon kalpean kidasta,
synkistä sysivesistä,
hampahista Manan linnun,
liedon Tuonelan joesta.

Then the grim, black bird of Tuoni,
swan of dark and deepest waters,
caught in jaws with terror fille’d,
full of iron fangs and deadly,
noble hero’s mantle woven,
so in dark, grim Tuoni drown him,
to bring him to blackest waters,
to those lands of ever-sleep and
to that birthing place of true death.

Down leapt Ville, dog most loyal,
dived he under waving waters,
so to save the hapless young man,
from the jaws of Death to carry,
from the deepest darkest waters,
far away from depths of Tuoni.

Then did strike the dog the knife wound,
bit the bones of bird this vilest,
seared beast’s neck black blood encrusted,
where was shard from blade now broken
that had Hannu boldly wielded.

Then did bite the dog most faithful
flesh with deathly pallor shrouded,
of that dark, grim bird of Tuoni.
So he twisted, so he turned it,
all his might he fully gathered,
sought to break the neck with his beak,
sinews rend with his bite sharpest.

Might of bone was all dispell’ed,
sinews all were cut and shattered.
Afore unbending fully yielded
neck, ‘twas broken from the stem and
throat its blood gave up, release’d,
flowed the reddest rivulets when,
fell the head so pallid severed,
which belonged to slender long neck,
of that deathly bird of Tuoni.

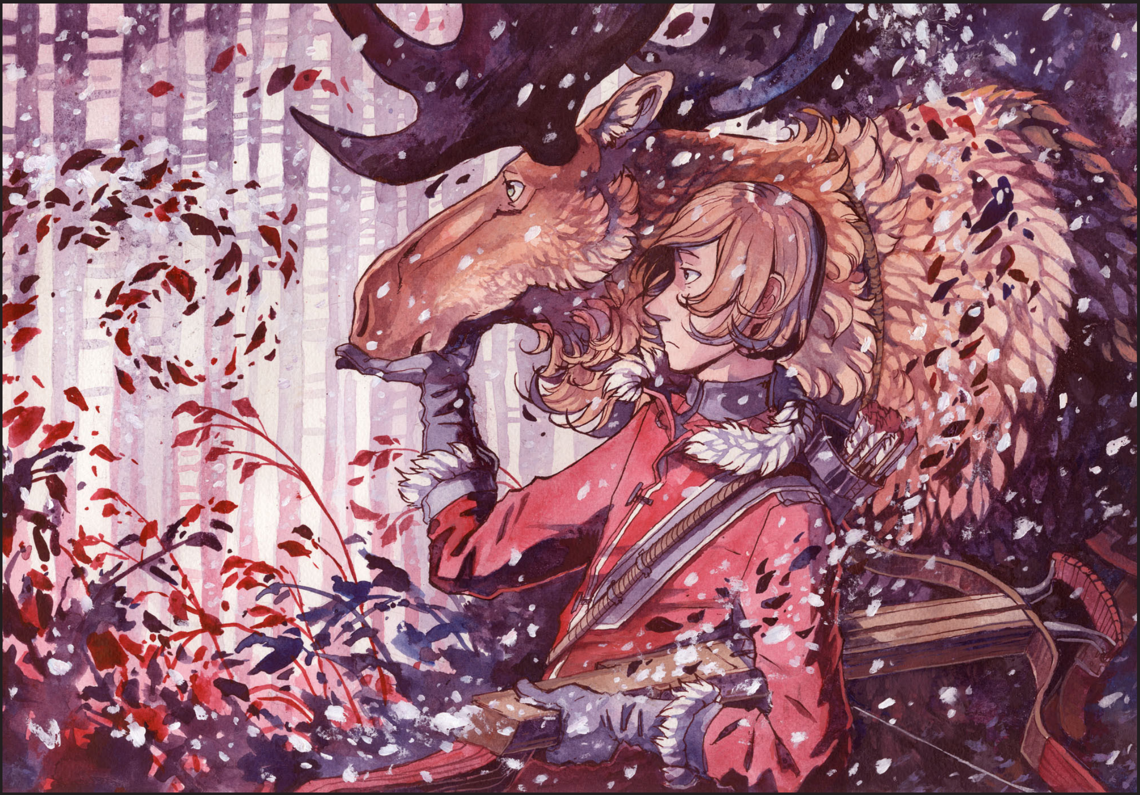
So did Ville, dog most loyal,
conquer pale grim swan of Tuoni.
Hannu did he save from waters,
from Death’s jaws forever hungry,
from the darkest deepest river,
from the maw of bird of Deathlands,
from Tuonela’s endless waters.

During the couple of years that I drew "A Redtail's Dream" I would occasionally also draw some general illustrations for the comic. Sometimes I needed one to use in a new layout for the website, sometimes for promotional purposes, and now and then just because I was particularly inspired to draw something other than yet another comic page. The following pages contain some of my personal favourites

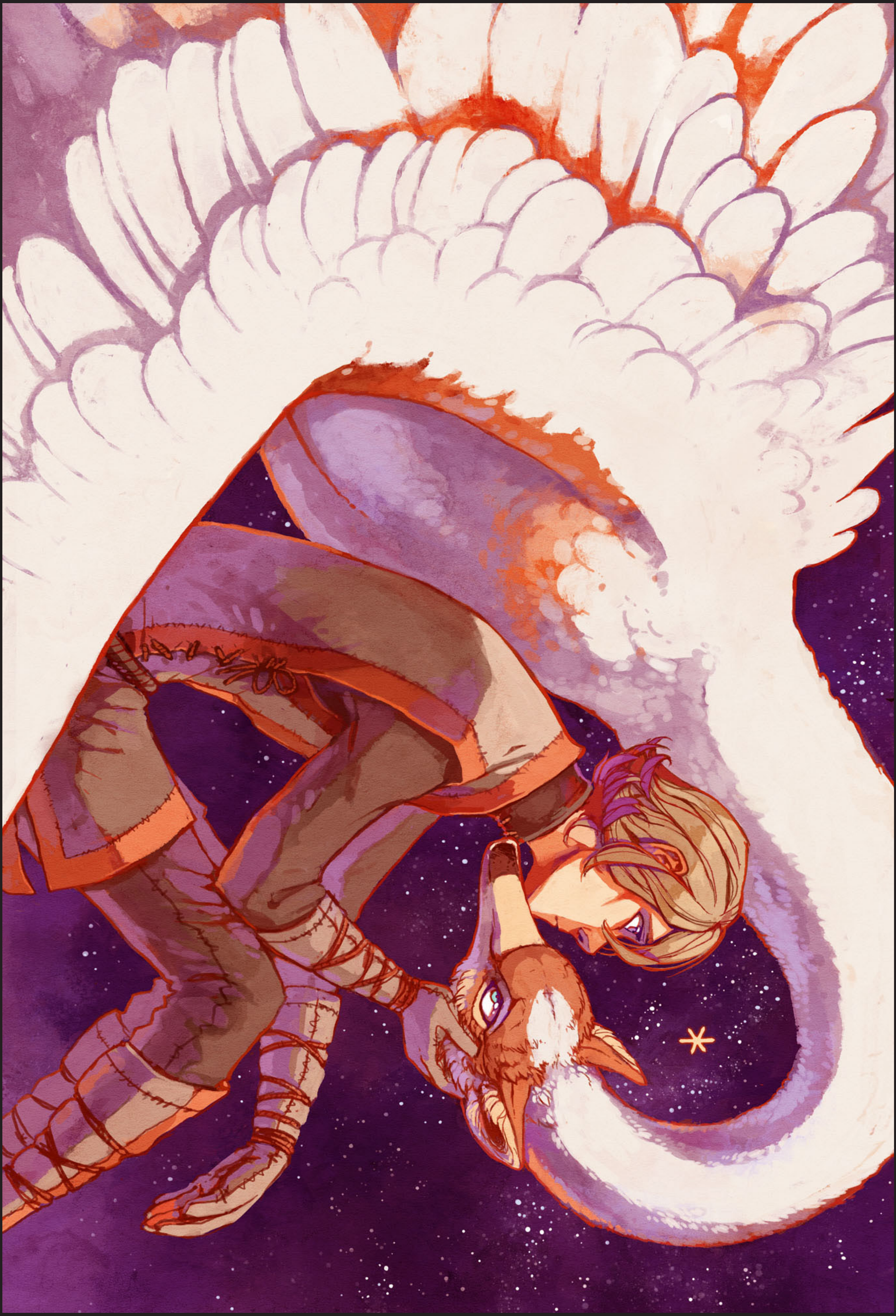
Drawing the comic pages

On the opposing page is an example of an uncolored page of the comic. All the pages were sketched and inked traditionally and then scanned and colored digitally. I drew the original pages on A3-sized, cheap, smooth and low-quality watercolor paper, which was awful for actual watercolors, but very nice for inking. When inking I used a brush and liquid ink for the large, black areas and I switched back and forth between using a dipping pen with liquid ink and black markers for the linework, often using both tools for one page.

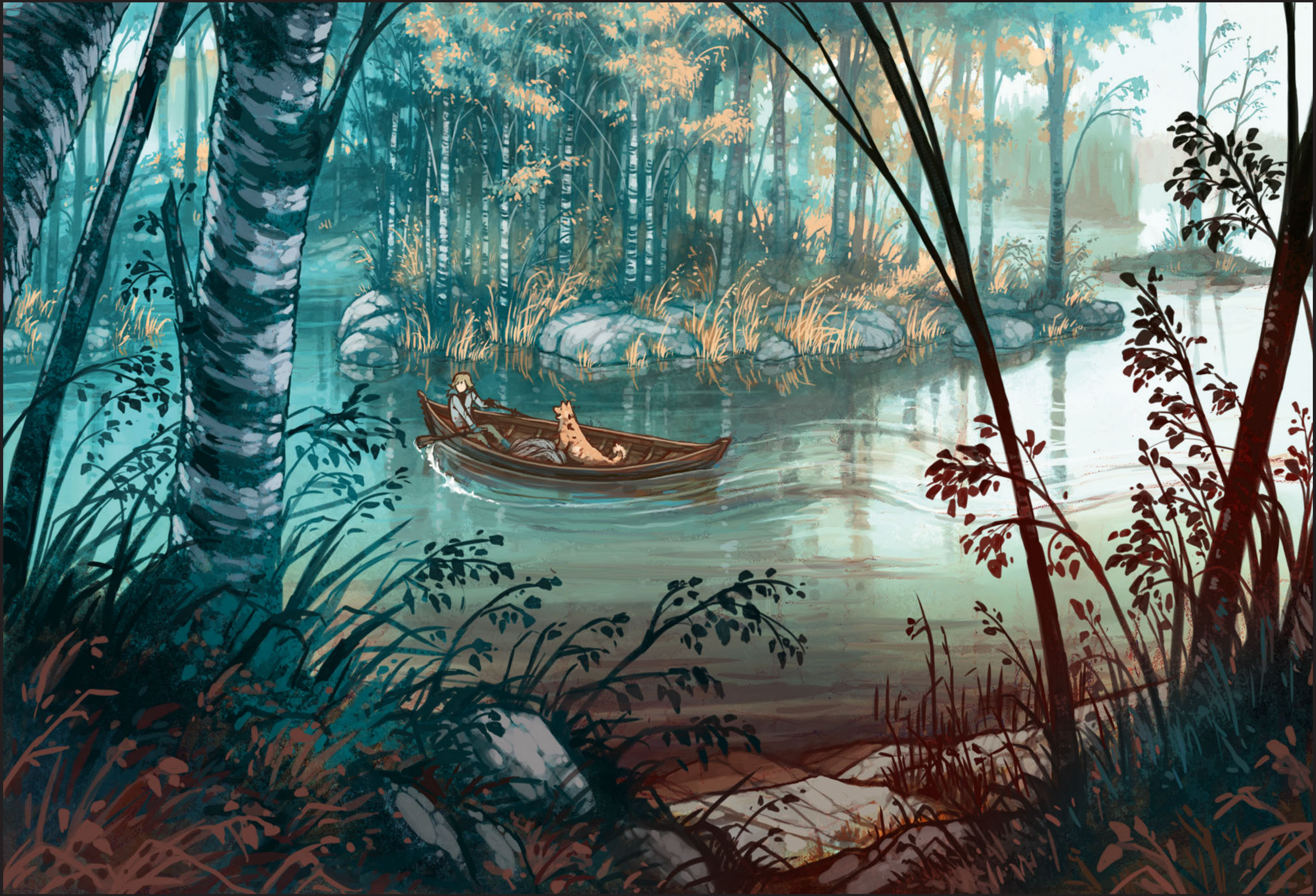
I did the coloring in Photoshop through the whole comic, but at the end of chapter 3 I upgraded from using a regular drawing tablet to one with an in-built touch-screen monitor, which sped up my process a bit. For the first couple of chapters the average page took me often over 10 hours to draw, and by the second half of the comic I was so comfortable with my process that I made it through a typical page in between 7 and 8 hours.



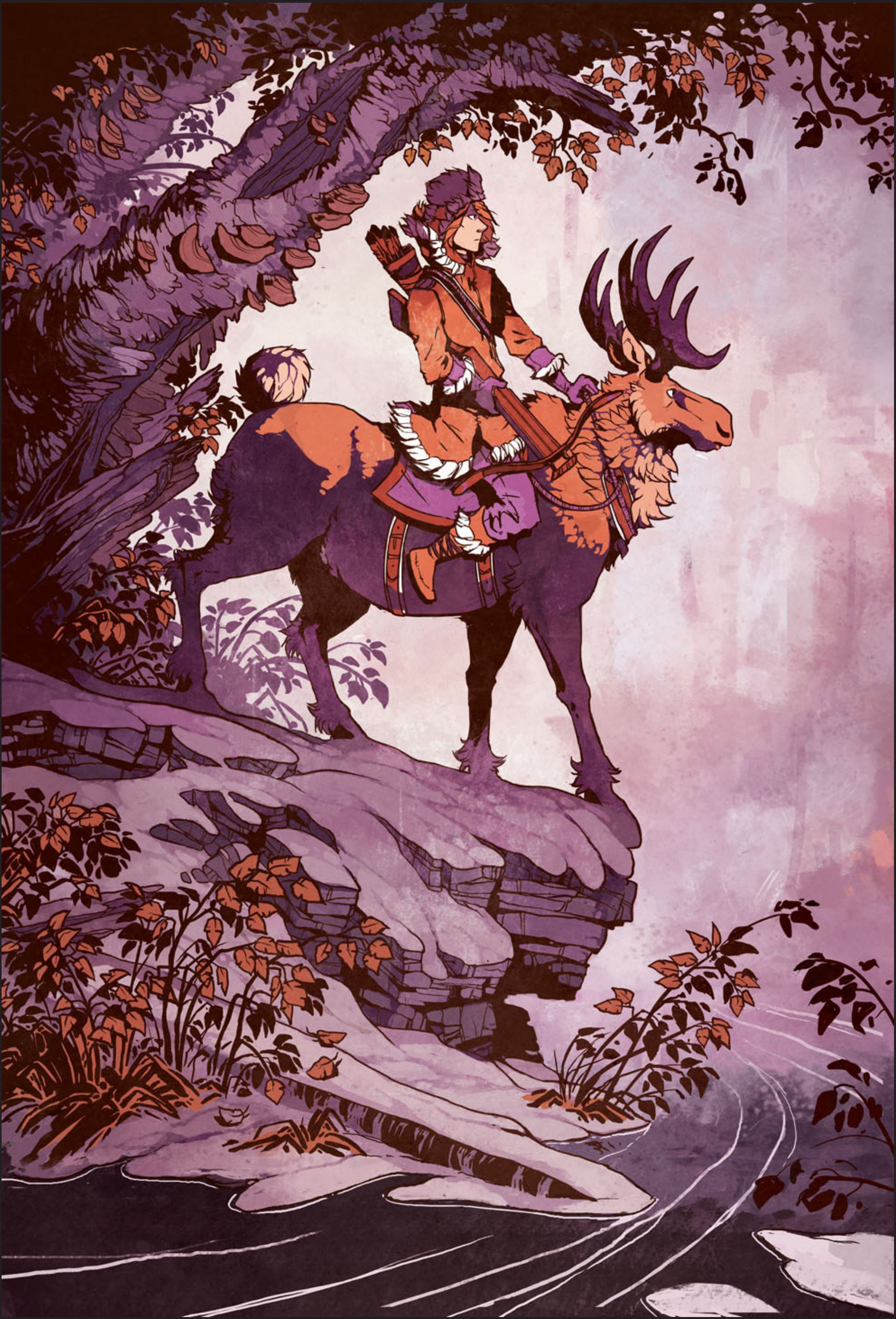
Moose hunting · *Hirven metsästys*



In the Realm of the Swan · *Joutsenen valtakunnassa*

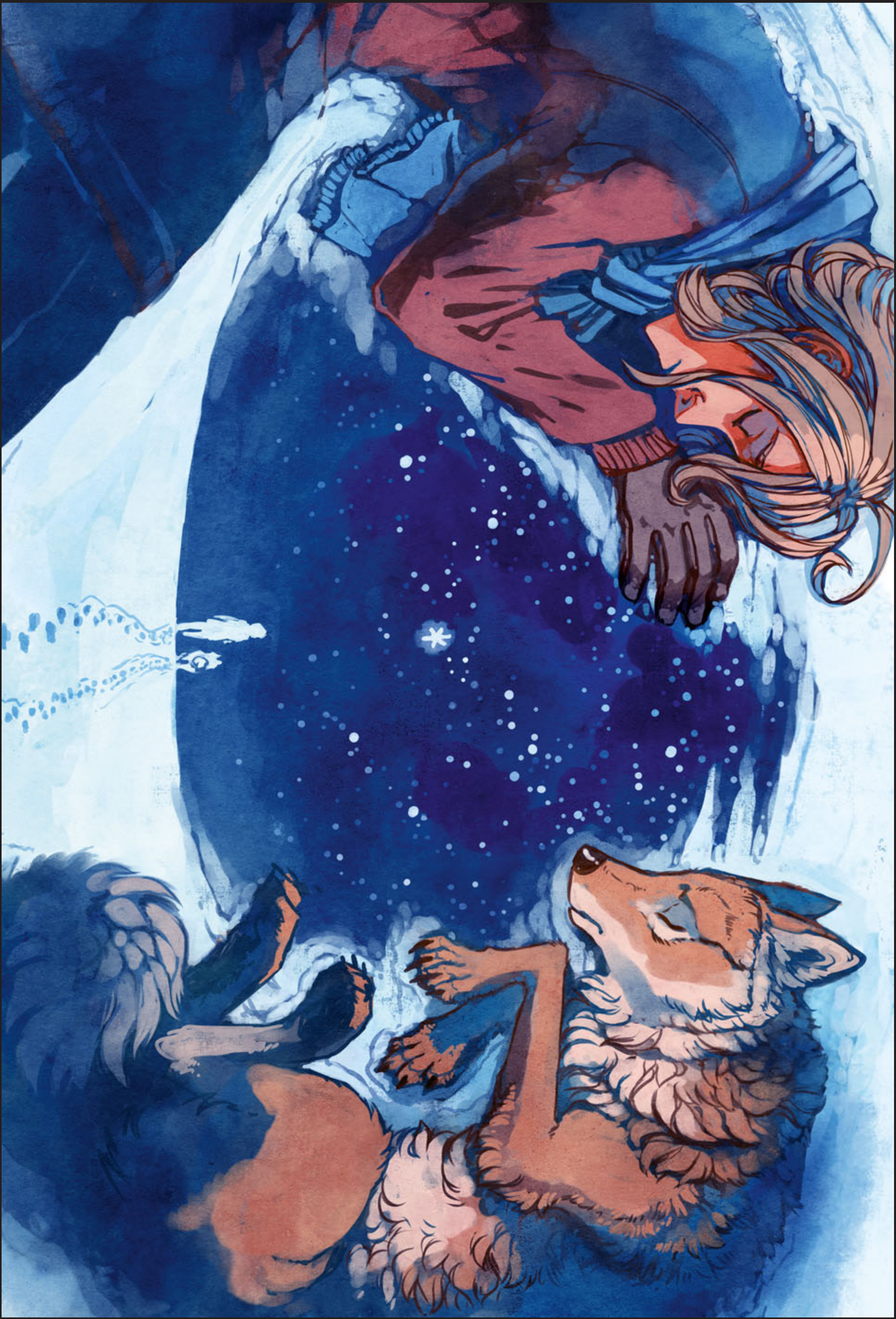


Strait · *Salmi*



Lookout · *Tähystys*

The North Star · *Pohjantähti*



The Beginning of a Tale · *Tarinan alku*

A Distant Dream · *Kaukainen uni*

About the author

I was born in Sweden in 1990 and moved to Finland with my family when I was 7 years old. I've always preferred to spend time by myself and have parents who let me do that, so therefore I had plenty of time to develop my drawing skills during my childhood and teen years. In 2013 I got my bachelor's degree in graphic design from Aalto university in Helsinki, and as of writing this I'm working full time on my second webcomic.

You can find my new comic (possibly comics, if enough time has passed) over at www.minnasundberg.fi. Assuming, of course, that you're reading this book in an age when the Internet is still a thing.

MINNA SUNDBERG